

**FEMININE
FRAILTY**

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

JUDICIAL DRAMAS
FAMOUS TRIALS RE-TOLD
THE MAYFAIR CALENDAR
BLOTTED 'SCUTCHEONS
CRIME ON THE CONTINENT
ETC.



EXECUTION OF MR. AND MRS. MANNING

FEMININE FRAILTY

By

HORACE WYNDHAM

“ Nay, women are frail, too.”—*Measure for Measure*

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

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“ Is it strange that the Serpent conquered Eve ? The Devil against a woman is fearful odds. He has conquered men, women’s conquerors ; he has made even angels fall.”

REV. JAMES HACKMAN.

“ What mighty ills have not been done by woman ? ”

THOMAS OTWAY.

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INTRODUCTION

(1)

FEMININE frailty began in the Garden of Eden. It has been continued everywhere and ever since.

“The Devil against a woman is fearful odds!” wrote the Rev. Mr. Hackman, who practised so little what he preached that he himself was presently to swing at Tyburn for misplaced love for one of them. Undoubtedly, the odds are heavy; and, where women are concerned, the path of strict rectitude is so narrow and beset with obstacles that it is not astonishing to find it being continually overstepped.

With regard to feminine behaviourism viewed as a whole, the consensus of masculine opinion (as voiced by accepted authorities) is not always ultra-flattering. Thus (among the many other hard and unfounded things he says of them) Schopenhauer declares that woman, as a class, is “much behind man in all matters of justice, probity, and scrupulous conscientiousness”; John Knox, Proudon, and Spencer are in close agreement with him; and Shakespeare is quite positive that “Frailty, thy name is Woman.” But it is left for Rykère to go furthest. “Feminine criminality,” he says, “is much more depraved and terrible in its results than masculine criminality.”

Perhaps so. It must, however, be remembered that in crime, whatever the sex of the protagonists, there are contrasts and similarities. Methods may appear different, but motives are apt to be very much the same. On her record, Messalina will

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assuredly stand out for all time as the World's Worst Woman. Still, in respect of general all-round viciousness, she has been run fairly close by competitors for this distinction. Every country and every age has produced such competitors. Cold-blooded and hot-blooded; avaricious, lustful, and profligate. A dreadful bead-roll.

One often hears of the "romance" of crime. Anything of the sort, however, is, with regard to the sex that there is an odd conspiracy to dub "gentle," very seldom encountered. Nor is the motivation of their particular misdeeds always governed by economic determinism. There are other factors—such as cupidity, lust, malice, passion, and revenge—that come into the scheme. All very regrettable, of course; but, none the less, all very human.

Murderesses have figured in every era and in every country; and women have stained their hands in the blood of their fellow-beings on account of avarice, jealousy, illicit passion, and revenge. Thus, Mary Blandy poisoned her father, to win a worthless lover; Catherine Hayes chopped off her husband's head to live with her paramour; Constance Kent cut the throat of her little brother, because she imagined herself "slighted"; Maria Manning shot Patrick O'Connor, to indulge a double instinct of revenge and greed; and Mrs. Carew, Mrs. Maybrick, and Mrs. Thompson were obviously actuated by what, for want of a better term, must be dubbed "passion." As to "passion," however, it is to be noted that, while this often leads to the most dreadful consequences, maternity, on the other hand, often serves as a prophylactic or restraint. The average woman, it would appear, thinks twice when conflict with the law threatens the well-being of her children.

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For purposes of comparison, flagitious femininity slips into two main classes : (1) the deliberately criminal woman ; and (2) the impulsively criminal woman. The former adopts crime as a "business" ; and it is from this section that are recruited the bulk of women-blackmailers, masqueraders, pilferers, shop-lifters, and swindlers whose speciality is the obtaining of goods (other people's) under false pretences. As a rule, they can be dealt with effectively enough, and their delinquencies controlled before they have gone too far. The impulsively criminal woman, however, is a much more serious menace. One never knows what she will be doing next. Still, it is fairly certain to be something violent.

A desire for vengeance is responsible for many appalling acts in women. Such vengeance, too, is often nourished in the feminine breast for very long periods. Thus, it has not even the partial excuse of being a reflex action, as is commonly the case with men. Feminine hatred, again, is stronger, more lasting, and more unforgetting than masculine hatred. This weakness (to call it by its proper name) probably accounts for vitriol-throwing and deeds of sheer cruelty among women.

With reference to manifestations of cruelty among them, Lombroso is unflattering enough to assert that woman has a fundamental leaning in this direction. Perhaps there is something in the idea. The classic example in England is that of "Mother Brownrigg," an eighteenth-century virago who had a habit of stripping her girl apprentices naked and flogging them to death. Nor was Sarah Metyard, who indulged in similar atrocities, any the less abominable. But this couple

were individuals, not types, and would seem to have suffered from what the psycho-analyst of to-day (who has a convenient label for every human oddity) would call a "sadistic complex."

Napoleon once declared that audacity was the trump card in warfare. So it is in wickedness. But nerve is wanted as well. This is where women, as a class, are apt to fail. Yet not always. Still, feminine flagitiousness is largely governed by feminine mentality. It must also be remembered that criminally inclined women labour under certain disabilities of sex which hinder them adopting the more vigorous forms of misconduct. Thus, from time to time, one hears of "hotel rats"; but never (or very seldom) of women-burglars and safe-breakers and garrotters, etc. Nor (possibly because they lack the technical equipment that makes for success, as well as being weak in arithmetic) do women seem to have found much allure in purely commercial swindles, other than such comparatively minor exploits as obtaining goods under false pretences. Instead, their graver trespasses are murder, blackmail, bigamy, and theft; and their lesser ones rarely go beyond shoplifting, smuggling silk stockings through the Customs (which, by some odd kink, they persist in regarding as venial), and petty pilfering. There are no recorded examples of women brigands in Europe; and only two of the sex, Anne Bonney and Mary Read, seem to have adopted piracy as a career. But, since their husbands were well established in the same line of business, perhaps they embarked upon it under compulsion.

This theory that a wicked wife invariably pursues her evil courses under the coercion of a vicious spouse is often advanced in the dock, and generally has much weight attached to it there by sympathetic judges and juries. Very often it does hold

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good. Still, not always. A notable exception is offered by the career of Mrs. Manning, who, with her callousness, courage, and craft, will long have her niche in criminal history (even as she has it in the Chamber of Horrors) as a domestic Lady Macbeth. Never, perhaps (but for Jael, with her shocking breach of hospitality), a woman so cold-blooded, since she deliberately prepared O'Connor's grave before sending him to it, and then sat down above it to a hearty meal of roast goose. Her husband helped her, it is true. His share, however, in the horrible business was comparatively negligible, for one has only to read his canting letters from the condemned cell to realise that he was as lily-livered as he was nauseous.

When, as often happens, conviction is secured upon purely circumstantial evidence, a wide field for conjectural speculation is necessarily thrown open. This was so to a special degree in the strange, baffling (and still unsolved) case of Edith Carew. But for the astonishing and eleventh-hour attempt of her counsel to fasten suspicion upon a third party, it is more than probable that the jury would have delivered a verdict of not guilty. They had a loophole in the fact that the drug which occasioned the death of Walter Carew might have been self-administered. So far, too, as could be gathered, his wife had no object in killing him. Undoubtedly, there was an intrigue. But the intrigue was very one-sided ; and it would appear that Mrs. Carew had a marked fondness for intrigue for its own sake. As for her *affaire* with the young bank clerk, this was probably born of *ennui* and a not unnatural desire to arouse the interest of a man younger than herself.

It is, of course, no extenuation, but if, after all, Edith Carew did administer poison, she was merely responding to a

feminine impulse. An impulse, too, of long standing. With reference to this matter, the monkish author of *The Discovery of Witchcraft*, writing in 1584, roundly declared that "women were the first inventors and the greatest practisers of poysoning, and more materially addicted and given thereunto than men." This is as unchivalrous as it is unfounded. Still, it is none the less a fact that, from the very earliest period in the world's history, women, when resolved upon committing murder, have generally had recourse to the phial. The drug, rather than the dagger or the pistol, is, it would seem, the medium to which they then turn instinctively. Psychologists, who are prepared to account for anything and everything, affect to see in this a natural disinclination among them to shed blood. Perhaps the theory is not so far fetched as it sounds. But it must also be remembered that, if opportunity does not exactly make the woman poisoner, it certainly helps her, for fly-papers are still common objects of every domestic pantry, and weed-killers of the average garden hut. One of these days it may possibly occur to the authorities that this circumstance calls for attention.

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The activities of the woman-poisoner stretch back to a very distant era. Thus, according to the old Greek legend, the sinister Hecate, together with her offspring Circe and Medea, brewed toxic herbs with nefarious intent. But mythology may here be left out of the reckoning, for there is an over-large crop of established instances of indulgence in this fell habit. A specially notable one (still quoted in the text-books)

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occurred in 331 B.C., when a batch of twenty attractive young widows were brought to trial in Rome on suspicion of preparing a draught that caused the sudden deaths of their husbands. Since they asserted that the brew was innocuous, the examining magistrate ordered the ladies to drink it themselves. None of them survived the test.

The criminal archives of the past show that organised schools of feminine poisoners have often existed throughout Europe. At the head of such establishments in France were de Brinvilliers, de Montespan, and La Voisin ; Gesina Gottfried and Anna Zwanziger functioned in Germany ; La Spara and Toffana had, between them, hundreds of victims in Italy ; and in Holland a total of 103 deaths from lethal drugs may be traced to Wilhelmina van der Linden. England has been comparatively free in this respect ; and the only woman practitioner on a really big scale was Mary Ann Cotton. Her record, however, was a mere sixteen.

The agency of arsenic as a ready means of removing unwanted or objectionable individuals was old before the world had stopped being young. It lingered long, becoming the common weapon, not only of wives who were weary of their spouses, but also of other people, such as the politician who discovered a rival in his path ; the heir waiting to succeed to an inheritance ; the officer desirous of quickening the normal flow of promotion ; and the theologian in disagreement with his superiors. If it did nothing else, this added a thrill to life, and checked stagnation.

During the Middle Ages women poisoners flourished throughout Europe to such an extent that they constituted themselves a serious menace to society. Since, too, the average

doctor of that period had but a scant knowledge of pathology, diagnosis and detection were very difficult. Still, when the customary reagents were unproductive of result, the rack often proved efficacious. None the less, the wine-cup, when offered by fair hands, was more to be feared than the sword or dagger of the masculine assassin who "worked" in the open. At one time, things reached such a pitch that male guests bidden to a dinner-party took the precaution of consulting their solicitors and making their wills beforehand.

Arsenic and opium and strychnine were usually adopted by such leading practitioners as the Borgias, the Brinvilliers, and the Medici. The infamous Toffana, who began her evil courses as a young girl, dispensed, under the non-suggestive names of "Acqua Toffana" and "Acquetta di Napoli," an arsenical solution which found a brisk sale among wives who wanted to get rid of their husbands. In 1709, being threatened with arrest, she took refuge in a convent, from which sanctuary she continued to dispose of her products for another score of years. Still, Justice, if slow, was sure; and, after a preliminary taste of prison and the rack, she finished up on the scaffold. Altogether, her victims are said to have numbered 600, and to have included at least two Popes.

Toffana had a rival competitor in a certain Hieronyma Spara, who also assisted society ladies to secure their conjugal freedom without the trouble and expense of divorce. Being suspicious of her methods, the authorities at last employed a woman to enlist her help in "removing" an imaginary husband. Although Hieronyma claimed to be a fortune-teller, she was unable to detect the enquirer as an emissary of the police. This lack of prevision was her undoing. "The hardened old

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hag," says a chronicler, "underwent the ordeal of the rack without confessing." But Justice triumphed, for "an accomplice divulged the secrets of the sisterhood, and La Spara and twelve others were duly hanged, while many others were publicly whipped and banished from the kingdom."

But husband-poisoning has long been a feminine vagary ; and, although—thanks, no doubt, to the spread of analytical knowledge among bacteriologists—it is now comparatively rare, instances still occur. The law has always adopted severe measures for its repression. In the "good old days," when the criminal code was less squeamish towards erring women, the practice was held to be petty treason ; and wives who divested themselves of their partners by this unorthodox method were, on conviction, boiled to death. As a not unnatural result, the mortality among husbands (which had hitherto been somewhat high) was much reduced. The penalty remained on the Statute Book for fifteen years ; and the last woman to "get into hot water" in this literal fashion was a certain Margaret Dany, who was condemned in 1542. Edward IV substituted the stake for the saucepan. Since 1786 the legislature has found the gallows a sufficient deterrent.

The Marquise de Brinvilliers derived her abominable knowledge from Captain St. Croix, a young cavalry officer, whose mistress she had been for years. Her speciality was also a preparation of arsenic. This, which she called, appropriately enough, "Poudre de Succession," was intended to remove inconvenient heirs. As such, it was undoubtedly efficacious, and was responsible for causing the premature deaths of her father, her two brothers, and her sister. Yet, not satisfied with this toll, she even attempted to poison her own daughter,

“because the girl was growing too tall.” In the character of a Lady Bountiful, this feminine fiend would visit the hospital wards of Paris, and surreptitiously mix deleterious drugs with the food and wine she offered the sufferers there. Madame de Sevigné, who took her measure, did well to compare her with Medea.

When suspicion at last fell on the Marquise, she fled, first to England, and then to Germany, where, in 1676, her arrest was effected by a police officer masquerading as an abbé. Smuggled back to France by a stratagem, she was put on trial in Paris ; and, being found guilty, was beheaded, her body burned, and her ashes scattered to the winds. Yet, notwithstanding her terrible record, the Abbé Picot, her confessor, declared that “she expired a true Christian, and begged her husband to bring up her children in virtue and the fear of God.” But the lady’s “penitence” was somewhat discounted by her last bitter harangue to the mob : “Why is it that, when so many others are guilty with me, I alone should have to suffer ?” As it happened, she was wrong, for one of her accomplices fared still worse, and was broken on the wheel.

La Voisin (otherwise Catherine Monvoisin) was in Satanic partnership with the renegade priest, Etienne Guibourg. Among those whom she supplied with “love powders” was the Marquise de Montespan, mistress of Louis XIV. In 1679 things had reached such a pitch, and so many suspicious deaths were occurring, that a judicial committee was appointed to detect the criminals and bring them to book. As, however, the scandals that were brought to light during the enquiry touched some very great names, “interest” was set to work and the King dissolved the commission before its task was

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completed. Still, La Voisin herself was executed, and a number of others were sent to the galleys. As for Madame de Montespan, she slipped off to a convent, and died in the odour of sanctity. In his last play, *Le Drame des poisons*, Sardou wove a drama round the incident, but without much regard to historical accuracy.

It is now upwards of ninety years since James Marsh (a self-taught working-man whose hobby was chemical research) evolved his celebrated method of detecting the presence of arsenic in the human organs. Since then, considerable advances have been secured. The result is, the pathologist beats the poisoner every time ; and there is no toxic drug that does not yield eventually to the test-tubes of the modern analyst who really understands his business. In fact, it is not too much to say that the road from freedom to the prison cell and the scaffold often passes through the door of the chemist's laboratory. Even murderously inclined doctors themselves have been brought to book, for dead patients still tell tales.

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It is often advanced against women that they do not tell men the truth. Still, if it comes to that, men very seldom tell women the truth about anything. Perhaps this weakness for deception accounts, in part, for the prevalence of that international figure, the feminine masquerader. All countries have had their Perkin Warbecks in petticoats. Thus, if England has contributed her Mrs. Gordon-Baillie and Henrietta Strangway, Mesdames Hanau and Humbert were daughters of France ; Germany has the discredit of Martha Kupfer, who netted £200,000 by selling bogus "decorations" to her compatriots ;

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and America is responsible for Mrs. Chadwick, whose wiles were such that even Andrew Carnegie succumbed to them. Dishonours are easy.

There is a very common impression that, although they are duped often enough by men, women are never deceived by their own sex. The archivists do not support this impression. The fact is, people believe what they want to believe. No matter how absurd or unfounded it may be, a claim to rank and social position will, if persisted in long enough and often enough, always find people of both sexes ready to testify to its genuineness. Even Mrs. de Serres, with her pathetic and preposterous demand to be "acknowledged" as one of the Royal Family, had staunch followers. Among them were two Members of Parliament, Sir Gerard Noel and Joseph Hume. The former was a nonentity ; and the latter (who had an unfortunate reputation for "talking oftener and longer and greater nonsense than anybody else") had once been told by a bored Minister that he was "an ass, incapable of understanding anything or anybody." Certainly, he did not understand Mrs. de Serres, who was what the modern alienist would probably catalogue as an "emotional defective." Still, it redounds to him that he always made a point of championing women in distress. Among those whose causes he espoused were Queen Caroline and Lady Ellenborough.

It is to their credit that, apart from a little handful of practitioners, Englishwomen have not shone as exponents of the "confidence-trick." Mrs. Gordon-Baillie was really a sad bungler ; and her minor successes were due far more to the tuft-hunting and stupidity of her victims than to her own initiative or skill. As for the woman who, for a long time,

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secured substantial sums by posturing as the “Hon. Eva Fox-Strangways,” it has been contended that her predatory schemes prospered because they were carried out in America. The theory is unfounded. London is quite as gullible as Chicago ; and Mayfair as snobbish as Fifth Avenue.

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The definition of “morals” is constantly altering. As often as not, it is now established on a political or scientific, rather than on a purely religious, foundation. None the less, ethical, as distinguished from legal, offences are still largely a feminine preserve ; and it is apt to be forgotten that vices, just as much as virtues, spring from the relationships of the sexes. One result of this is that, in countries where concubinage was long accepted as a commonplace, breaches of the seventh commandment by a wife were held to be opposed to the family spirit, and, as such, were always punished with fierce rigour. This principle was pushed so far that, if he elected to forgive an erring wife her slip, an injured husband himself incurred reprisals. The present practice of such a husband seeking redress in the law courts, and suing for damages on account of his partner’s conjugal infidelity, is comparatively modern.

When, with the passage of time, the ecclesiastical authorities lost their early enthusiasm for interfering with other people’s business and managing the affairs of the body politic, the inevitable happened. Discipline over the conduct of their members was relaxed ; the penalties for non-observance of the social code became gradually less severe ; and, although the Church still stormed and thundered against “sins of the

flesh," human nature proved stronger than compulsory asceticism.

On this subject of ethical, as distinguished from legal, misconduct, it is to be noted that through all the ages and all the countries the courtesan has ever been a prominent figure. Whatever may be said to the contrary (and a great deal is said to it), her influence has not always been for evil. Jane Shore, Nell Gwynne (whose funeral sermon, "much to her praise," was preached by Dr. Tenison, subsequently Archbishop of Canterbury), Emma Hamilton, Mary Anne Clarke, and Harriette Wilson, if fair but frail, were of infinitely more account than many of the self-righteous who have cold-shouldered and belittled them. Of Jane Shore, for example, mistress of Edward IV, it is chronicled that "she delighted all by her beauty, pleasant behaviour, and proper wit." The Church, however (unmindful of the precepts of the New Testament), treated her badly ; and the Bishop of London dealt out full measure of prison, pillory, and penance. Still, the biographer, the poet, the compiler of the chap-book, and the dramatist have, between them, since made much of her.

The truth of the matter is, if, like other people, they have their failings, courtesans also have their merits. Some of them, who have proved exceptionally self-poised, clear-visioned, and intelligent, have played a big part in political and social circles. As such, they have stood on the steps of thrones ; have made history ; and have swayed empires. Hence it is high time that the customary harrying and chivying of them from pillar to post were stopped, and a larger measure of tolerance extended them. After all, there are many great houses in our midst that have sprung from women who were not exactly conspicuous

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for their chastity. The peerage is full of such instances ; and batons-sinister stretch across the proudest shields.

After all, whatever may be adduced to her disfavour, the courtesan (as distinguished from the demirep and wanton) has at least a negative merit. This is well summed up by Lecky in a memorable and oft-quoted passage in his *History of European Morals* :

Herself the supreme type of vice, she is ultimately the most efficient guardian of virtue. But for her the unchallenged purity of countless happy homes would be polluted, and not a few who, in the pride of their untempted chastity, think of her with an indignant shudder, would have known the agony of remorse and of despair. On that one degraded and ignoble form are concentrated the passions that might have filled the world with shame. She remains, while creeds and civilisations rise and fall, the eternal priestess of humanity, blasted for the sins of the people.

Contrary to the general belief on the subject (as set forth in tracts and “improving” literature), courtesans do not always take to the bottle. Some of them take to the Bible. Outstanding examples of what may be catalogued as modern Pelagians of British extraction are furnished by the careers of Laura Bell and Lola Montez. In each of these cases, too, the “conversion” was no flash-in-the-pan. On the contrary, it was deep and sincere and lasting. With regard to Laura Bell, it is to her credit that she was still quite a young woman when she elected to leave the broad path for the narrow one. Nor did Lola Montez wait until the constricting clutch of advancing years had reached out and gripped her.

Times change. Something very like an aureole once surrounded the courtesan, and her calling was elevated to a lofty

pinnacle of esteem. Pelagia was not by any means the only member of her class who, on electing to turn over a fresh leaf, was received back into the bosom of the Church and canonised. The official list includes Marguerite de Cortone, Angèle de Foligny, and Claire de Rimini. The curious will discover interesting accounts of the careers of these light ladies in *Les Courtisanes Saintes* of Charles de Bussy. But, although doubtless well meant, the recognition of the courtesan, and the granting to her of privileges withheld from the rigidly correct, sometimes had embarrassing results. Thus, in the days of the Emperor Tiberius, it was even responsible for the issue of an edict forbidding women of the aristocracy enrolling themselves in her ranks. The professionals, it would appear, brooked no competition from amateurs.

Although they may (and occasionally do) rise to what passes for "distinction," the origin of the courtesan is seldom lofty. That of Catherine Walters, for example, was the humble one of a skittle-alley in a Liverpool public-house. Yet, from this unpromising *milieu*, she rose, by a combination of character and circumstances, to a position that secured her wealth and power, and, eventually, respect. Therefore she must, as the stock phrase has it, "have had something in her."

By the way, for those who can recognise them, coy and guarded references to both Cora Pearl and "Skittles" are to be found in the florid pages of Ouida's *Under Two Flags*. These now almost classic exemplars of a bygone *Hetæræ* are also served up in a multitude of "memoirs" and "reminiscences" dealing with the Aspasia and Phrynes of the 'sixties and 'seventies. It is also of literary interest to remember that

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in *Puck*, another of her long-forgotten novels, Ouida selects with much daring the comprehensive name of "Laura Pearl" for a lady of easy virtue.

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Feminine misconduct and legal procedure are, of course, closely allied. In theory, the law does not take sex into account. In practice, however, it takes sex very much into account. A useful volume, dealing with this and cognate matters, *Woman Under English Law*, is one written by Maud Crofts, a woman solicitor of standing.

Although it is not, perhaps, meant to do so, this work indicates very clearly that, when it comes to a clash of masculine and feminine interests, women have a good deal of preferential treatment extended them. A wife, at any rate, certainly has more privileges than her husband. Thus, the consequences of her civil breaches (in particular, scandal, assault, and trespass) are visited upon him ; and her actual crimes are often attributed by defending counsel and compassionate juries to his "coercion." Such presumption, is far-fetched ; and, in these days of boasted "equality," should be abolished. "It is somewhat difficult," says Sir William Russell, "to extract from the authorities any definite and reasoned classification of the crimes to which this presumption applies." Nominally, the doctrine of "coercion" is applicable to all offences other than treason and murder. The jurists, however, are discreetly dumb as to what constitutes "coercion," but they seem to think that this element crops up where the crime has been committed in the actual presence of the husband.

If women nowadays are not exactly the "spoiled darlings of

the law," they none the less manage to come fairly near it in a number of directions. Thus, although a husband may be convicted of receiving goods stolen by his wife, no such charge can be sustained against a wife who, planning the theft and hovering carefully in the background, receives goods stolen by her husband, and surreptitiously enjoys their use. Similarly, a husband is under a legal obligation to support his wife. Yet, beyond keeping him out of the workhouse (and then only if she have a separate estate), no such obligation devolves upon a wife. A husband, too, is responsible for the funeral expenses of his wife ; but a wife is not responsible for those of her husband. Nor can a married woman be arrested for debt. This, of course, is sound, since nothing would be gained by depriving her children of their natural and proper guardianship. Still, by pledging his credit, an extravagant wife may burden her husband with a load of indebtedness that, if he neglect to discharge it, may land him in prison on a judgment-order.

The old and long-cherished principle that a husband and wife are one (and that one always the husband) has, but for a few comparatively unimportant exceptions, now gone into the limbo of the law. Since 1925 three separate Acts demolishing this ridiculous theory have been placed on the Statute Book. As a result of the recent Administration of Estates Act, the position of a widow whose husband has omitted to make a will is immensely improved. Again, if a husband should invest money in his wife's name (a common and popular preliminary to bankruptcy), she has a clear title to it. Yet, should she invest money in her husband's name, she is still regarded as the owner of it. If this is not an anomaly, it bears a suspicious resemblance to one.

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Similarly in Revenue matters. So far as the incidence of the income-tax may be said to favour anybody, it certainly favours the married woman. Her husband is solely responsible for settling the collector's demands, and he is assessed on his wife's income (whether he enjoys any portion of it or not) as well as on his own. A widow, too, is not required to meet from her separate estate any balance due from her deceased spouse. Scots law is still kinder, particularly in respect of matrimonial causes. North of the Tweed, too, a married woman is the absolute mistress of her own property, and her husband cannot cut her out of his will.

That the law is often strained in favour of women (but not necessarily erring women) is beyond question. Thus, wife-desertion is an offence, but husband-desertion is not. Then take breach of promise actions. The woman who brings one against a man is considered by the public an object of sympathy, and (if her counsel know his business) is fairly certain to secure thumping damages. The man, however, who brings such an action against a woman is merely held up for public derision and a target for cheap witticisms. Yet, since a promise to marry is a mutual contract, he is quite justified in suing when it is broken.

One last privilege restricted to women. While there is no "Jury of Fathers," a "Jury of Matrons" can, when the circumstances demand it, be empanelled.

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If statistics on the subject be accepted as a criterion, women are much less given to criminality than men. But statistics

should not be accepted. They do not go far enough to be of any value, since there are none relative to the precise amount of temptation to which the two sexes are exposed. Still, while it has not yet disappeared, feminine misconduct would certainly seem to be rapidly diminishing. At any rate, only one prison in the whole of London is now required for the accommodation of such delinquents, whereas half a century ago there were a dozen.

But, as for most things, there is a reason for this. It is that (since chivalry is not dead, but merely moribund) there is, where the opposite sex are concerned, a general reluctance on the part of men to prosecute ; and, unless the offence be really serious, the injured party is apt to exhibit symptoms of moral myopia. Considered as a whole, this is perhaps just as well, for prison has a much worse effect on women than on men. Another point, not without its bearing, is that, speaking generally, the woman criminal is less given to rule-of-thumb methods than the male criminal. She is more crafty and subtle in her methods. Also, she prefers to play a lone hand, and seldom "works" with an accomplice. Detection thus becomes more difficult, for the smaller the number of people concerned in the commission of an offence, the smaller the number of clues left for the police to discover.

Different minds go with different physical structures. Hence, any study of the manifestations of wrongdoing among women is, if carried out by a man, full of problems and pitfalls. To begin with, there is no common ground of approach to the task. Women as a body may be superior to men, or inferior to men, but they are not, and never can be, similar to them in either their viewpoint or their conduct, and thus no

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geometrician (not even a feminist one) can make the sexes "equal." Yet our legal system ignores this elementary principle, and estimates their actions by precisely the same standards. In the traffic of the dock, sex, as sex, counts for nothing.

It is just as well, and saves a lot of trouble in the end, to recognise things for what they are, and not for what we want them to be. All conduct, good or bad (or merely indifferent), is the inevitable outcome of impulses and inhibitions. The alienist and the psychiatrist go further, and declare that there is a definite relationship between certain gland functions and vicious tendencies ; and all sorts of whimsical deductions are set out by them in graphs and charts. There are also pundits (they generally call themselves "criminologists") who fill solid volumes with diagrams and carefully tabulated "results" of answers to searching questions put by them to selected feminine delinquents in prisons and rescue homes. The weak point about them, however, is that all the "conclusions" at which they laboriously arrive are based on the assumption that the subjects of their enquiries have spoken the truth. The assumption is a big one.

Apart from this obvious drawback, none of the "conclusions" thus set forth seem to come to anything of utilitarian worth. Certainly they do not solve the enigma of criminality in women, or reveal what goes to the feminine complex that it should have such different results in different women. One develops into an Elizabeth Fry, another into a Maria Manning ; one becomes a Florence Nightingale, another a Cora Pearl. Yet, from a superficial standpoint, they all started equally. What, then, accounts for these marked variations ?

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Is it the existence, or the non-existence, of some subtle molecular instability or cerebral twist? It really looks like it.

From this question springs another. What are the prime causes of feminine misconduct? Nobody knows, but everybody has an opinion. Thus (when he does not say they are abdominal) the physician says they are pathological; the alienist says they are mental; and the Church still adheres to a pathetic belief that they are to be found in "original sin." Everybody says something different. It is all very confusing—and unhelpful.

On this matter, it is probably quite safe to say that a criminal woman is the joint product of adverse social conditions welded to anomalous biological conditions. But this only touches the fringe of the periphery; and it is not at all safe to say anything more, without being prepared to travel very far into the realms of sheer empiricism. Still, undeterred by this restriction, people do say a great deal more. The subject of feminine delinquency is discussed at considerable length, and from all its aspects, by criminologists of such admitted repute as Cesare Lombroso, Enrico Ferri, Hanns Gross, Prosper Despine, Adolphe Prins, Louis Proal, and Raoul de la Gras-serie, etc., on the Continent; and by many others of similar standing in England and America. But it is all rather beating the wind, for the problem of crime in woman (as in man) will never be solved by theoretical abstractions. Nor, for that matter, will it yield to either pulpit exhortations or penitential discipline.

Feminine frailty began in the Garden of Eden. Nobody knows when (or where) it will end.

When one has said this, one has said everything.

LAURA BELL



LAURA BELL
A British Pelagian

LAURA BELL

(1)

THERE is a certain amount of mystery about the birth and upbringing of Laura Bell. She herself always maintained a discreet silence on the subject ; and, of the many that have appeared no two versions are similar. According to the most commonly accepted one, she was the younger daughter of an Irish constable, who was subsequently appointed bailiff to the Marquis of Hertford. In a second version, however, the constable is given brevet rank as Captain Bell, of Glenconway, Co. Antrim. Be this as it may, the fact that his daughter, who was born in 1829, was christened Laura Eliza Jane Seymour would suggest that Mr. Bell, whatever his official position, was somebody a cut above an Irish policeman ; and people who knew her as a girl would not have been surprised to hear that her father was really Lord Hertford himself.

As Mr. Bell, whether constable or captain, had very little money, it was necessary for Laura to earn her own living, and contribute to the family exchequer as soon as possible. She began by securing employment in a draper's shop. This, however, did not last long, for the proprietor's wife suddenly discovered that her husband had become more friendly with his young and pretty assistant than was warranted by their respective positions. The result was, after an interchange of uncomplimentary opinions between the girl and herself, the

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former was “given notice” and bundled off to Dublin without a “character.” Still, she could not be deprived of something she already possessed, viz. an astonishingly beautiful face, a witty tongue, and an irresistible attraction for the opposite sex.

Young as she was, Laura Bell was fully aware that these gifts had their market value. Accordingly, she decided that life held something better for her than serving in a shop. At first she thought of following the example of an elder sister and going on the stage. The work, however, was so hard, and the cash rewards so small, that she very soon relinquished the idea, and selected another profession as being better adapted to her personality. This one was “the oldest in the world.” That she made a success of it is clear, since she was soon set up in an “establishment” of her own, together with a carriage and pair, and a handsome allowance from a wealthy admirer.

As the acknowledged queen of the Dublin *demi-monde*, Laura Bell had the ball at her feet. She set it rolling briskly, and to considerable effect. Smart young aides-de-camp attached to the Castle, officers of the garrison, and rich business men competed for her favours. She was not sparing in granting them. After a few years, however, she felt that England might offer a better field for her particular wares. In 1850, accordingly, she left Ireland and transferred herself to London, where she took a house in Wilton Crescent.

It was a case of “coming, and seeing, and conquering.” Before she had been established a year in London, the tale of her amours and *liaisons* with men of wealth and position (she would have nothing to do with any others) spread through the town. She had her box at the Opera and her carriage in the Park. Obsequious shopkeepers fawned upon her, and

dressmakers and jewellers and florists contended among themselves for her patronage. A distinguished artist painted her portrait ; and reproductions of the picture (which an enterprising manufacturer of boot polish adapted for advertising purposes) were sold by the thousand. Thackeray, wanting a name for the wishy-washy heroine of his new book, *Pendennis*, is said to have deliberately selected that of Laura Bell out of all the others he might have chosen ; her exploits were served up, with *sauce piquante*, in "topical songs" at Evans's rooms in Covent Garden ; and street ballad-mongers hawked a popular ditty, "Laura, Laura, we adore her !" which was introduced into half the pantomimes.

This was "success," or something very near it.

In her deliberately chosen career as a courtesan, Laura Bell aimed high. She knew exactly what she wanted, and would put up with nothing but the very best. Although she had done well for herself in Dublin, in London she did better. Before she had been installed there any appreciable time, her little house in Wilton Crescent served as a magnet which attracted peers, politicians, financiers, and merchant princes by the dozen. Everybody was welcome so long as he had money to spend, and was prepared to spend it.

"Clearly do I call to mind," said Sir Francis Burnand, in his volume of reminiscences, "Laura Bell's pretty doll-like face, her big eyes, not ignorant of an artistic touch that added a lustre to their natural brilliancy, and her quick, vivacious glances as she sat in an open phaeton, vivaciously talking with a variety of men, all 'swells' of the period, of course, at the corner of the drive near the Achilles Statue, while her smart little 'tiger' stood at the horses' heads. What strange stories I

used to hear of her recklessness, her prodigality, her luxury, and her cleverness."

Of Laura Bell's remarkable attractiveness during this period there were no two opinions. Even the angry matrons, who shuddered when her name was mentioned, and called her "that woman," had to admit that she was richly endowed. Her face was an almost perfect oval ; her eyes a velvety blue ; her figure and colouring without a blemish; and her expression that of a trusting and innocent child. Whenever she appeared in public, she created a furore. Crowds followed her carriage in the Park ; and it is said that when she visited the Opera, the whole audience stood up to watch her leave the house. She also sat to a distinguished artist, who employed his brush to paint her as "The Nun." Considering her distinctly equivocal career (which suggested anything but the convent), it was an odd character to assume. Still, the result was very popular ; and thousands of reproductions were exhibited in the shop windows all over the kingdom, and preserved in mid-Victorian scrap-albums by suburban young women. Another portrait, to which her name was attached, was afterwards painted for Lord Kilmorey.

The artist who painted this second picture was Buckner. "When we first knew him," writes Mrs. Godfrey Pearse in *The Enchanted Past*, "he had made a great success by his portrait of a celebrated *demi-mondaine*, Laura Bell. . . . Although the period was mid-Victorian, which is nowadays discussed as a time when everybody put their heads in the sand like ostriches, the *beau monde* flocked to Buckner's studio to see the portrait, and it brought him many commissions from ladies of the most impeccable reputation."

(2)

Despite her considerable triumphs in the Courts of Love, the restless spirit of Laura Bell demanded constant change of environment. She could not stop anywhere long. As soon as London began to pall, she hurried off to Paris. There, although the competition was fierce, her name was soon linked with, among others, that of Napoleon III. His fickle Majesty could deny her nothing ; and, while she lived under his "protection" in the Avenue Friedland, he squandered thousands of pounds on her. But the *liaison* ended ; and, on returning to England, the woman who had for a memorable period basked in the smiles of an Emperor, crossed the paths of a couple of Indian potentates who then happened to be visiting London. One of these was Maharajah Dhuleep Singh, of Lahore, and the other was Jang Bahadur, Prime Minister to the Maharajah of Nepal. This latter was a man of huge fortune and an Oriental idea of spending it. From him Laura Bell is said to have received a fabulous sum during the continuance of their "friendship."

Neither of them knew it, of course, but the meeting of the pair was to write a chapter in the after history of the British Empire.

An odd tale dealing with the "friendship" of Laura Bell and her Eastern admirer was published some time ago in a ladies' fashion journal. According to this, when he was returning to his own country, the potentate (whose name was given as Salar Jung) handed her a ring, with instructions to send it back to him if ever she wanted his help, which he pledged himself by the Beard of the Prophet to give. After a lapse of

several years, the test is said to have arisen when, during the stormy days of 1857, it was evident that the attitude adopted by Salar Jung, who was all powerful in Hyderabad, would be a critical factor in checking the Sepoy Revolt. Thereupon, so this account declared, Laura Bell, deciding to be patriotic even at the cost of publicly admitting her lapse from virtue, went to the Prince of Wales and told him of her dusky admirer's promise. The Prince, it is said, urged her to forward the love-gage to the giver, accompanied by a request that he would throw in his lot with England. This was done ; and, on receiving back the pledge of affection, Salar Jung fulfilled his pledge, and promptly put all the troops under his command at the disposal of the British, "thereby showing himself a man whose name ever merits our gratitude and admiration." He also led the Hyderabad warriors in person, "performing," it is added, "prodigies of valour and deeds of daring that made him conspicuous from one end of India to the other."

The anecdote, as thus given, certainly redounds to the credit of Laura Bell and Salar Jung. It has, however, inherent weaknesses that make it difficult to accept. This is in respect of dates. First of all, Salar Jung did not visit England until 1876, or more than twenty-five years after he is supposed to have met the heroine of the ring episode there. Secondly, when the Sepoy Revolt occurred, the Prince of Wales was but a lad of sixteen, and scarcely in a position to receive the confidences of ladies with "pasts." All such were carefully kept at a distance from him by the rigidly correct Colonel Bruce, to whose "governorship" he had been entrusted by the Queen and the Prince Consort. Hence the theory of his intervention can be dismissed as a piece of journalistic embroidery.

There is, however, an obvious explanation of these discrepancies. It is that an ignorant and slipshod paragraphist, to whom all Indian names were the same, had mixed up Salar Jung, of Hyderabad, with Jang Bahadur, of Nepal. This latter potentate certainly did visit London when Laura Bell first arrived there ; and it is common knowledge that the two were on "friendly" terms.

It was towards the beginning of the year 1850 that Jang Bahadur left his native fastnesses, and travelled to England, as Ambassador from the King of Nepal, with letters and gifts for Queen Victoria. Accompanying him was a considerable retinue of British and Indian officials (with Colonel Lawrence as bear-leader and interpreter) and twenty-six cooks to prepare his meals. All went well until he reached Southampton, where the Customs authorities nearly caused diplomatic relations to be broken off by exhibiting an untactful interest in his baggage.

With a view to impressing the illustrious visitor, the Government took special care that he should be shown the utmost hospitality during his sojourn in England ; and the official programme prepared by the authorities included banquets given in his honour by Lady Palmerston and the Duke of Wellington ; a visit to Epsom, to see the Derby ; a military review on Woolwich Common ; a gala performance at Covent Garden ; a Drawing-room at St. James's Palace ; and an invitation from Queen Victoria to attend the christening of the Duke of Connaught.

Since Miss Laura Bell was not bidden by the official hosts to share in these festivities, Jang Bahadur (who had made her acquaintance under circumstances that pointed to culpable slackness on the part of Colonel Lawrence) spent a good deal

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of his leisure at her house instead. On leaving London for Paris, where he was the guest of Prince Louis Napoleon, it was to find that his Wilton Crescent hostess had preceded him there ; and in her agreeable company he attended a review of the garrison at Satary.

It was hoped that much that would prove beneficial to our interests in India would result from this introduction of Jang Bahadur to the manners and customs of Great Britain. "I look upon this visit to England," wrote a missionary (in happy ignorance of the unscheduled dalliance in Wilton Crescent), "as one of the many gradual, but sure, measures and steps by which the Almighty is paving Asia with the lasting benefits of Western civilisation."

On the outbreak of the Mutiny there was considerable anxiety at Calcutta as to the action that would be adopted by Jang Bahadur. But the anxiety was short-lived, and he very soon shows that his protestations of friendship for the British were genuine by offering the services of himself and his Nepalese army to the Governor-General, Lord Canning. The gesture was much appreciated, since it was known that his compatriot, the Begum of Oudh, was putting pressure on him to join the rebels and "kill and destroy utterly the infidel English." Jang Bahadur, however, answered that blood-thirsty lady with a flat refusal, and wrote her the following letter :

Since the star of faith and integrity, sincerity in words as well as in acts, and the wisdom and comprehension of the British, are shining as bright as the sun in every quarter of the globe, be assured that my Government will not disunite itself from the exalted British Government, or be instigated to join with

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any monarch against it, be he as high as Heaven. . . . If you still be inclined to make war on the British, no rajah or king in the world will give you an asylum, and death will be the end of it.

Be it known, I have written what has come into my plain mind ; and it will be proper and better for you to act in strict accordance with what I have said.

The British Government did not prove ungrateful to the man who had thus stood by them at a critical period in the history of India ; and, as a reward for his loyalty, Jang Bahadur received a Grand Cross of the Bath, and a large strip of territory that had been annexed many years earlier was restored to Nepal.

(3)

In January 1858, Laura Bell began the new year with what was to her a new experience, and, to the surprise and envy of her acquaintances (no less than to the fury of matchmaking mothers, whose ambitions she upset), formed a permanent union which was sanctioned by the Church. The husband on whom fell her wandering choice was Augustus Frederick Thistleton-Wayte, a young man who, from the position of a penniless ensign in the Army, had suddenly inherited a considerable fortune, most of which was derived from house-property in the Paddington district.

Whatever the mystery about Laura Bell's parentage, there was none about that of Mr. Thistleton-Wayte. A godson of the Duke of Sussex, he was a man of good county family, his father being High Sheriff and M.P. for Hampshire, and his mother was a daughter of Henry Bathurst, Bishop of Norwich.

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The family seat, Southwick Park, was a place of historic interest, as it was there that, at a period when it was a priory, had been solemnised the marriage of Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou.

The honeymoon was spent abroad ; and Henry Vizetelly, a wandering journalist, chanced upon the pair at Homburg, where he found them engaged in assisting M. Blanc, who directed the kursaal, to acquire the fortune with which the Monte Carlo casino was subsequently built by him.

“ There were,” he says, “ two players at roulette, who, every morning, were punctually in their places when the kursaal flunkey arrived with the treble-locked, oak-bound chest containing the notes and specie which the officials hoped would suffice for the requirements of the day. These were the wealthy Mr. Thistlethwaite [Vizetelly’s spelling] and the notorious Laura Bell, whom he had recently married. . . . The pair sat day after day at the tables, courting Fortune with a patience which Penelope might have envied.”

With its customary perverseness, however, M. Blanc’s roulette wheel revolved in every direction but that which would have benefited his English visitors. Still, this was of small account to them, for Mr. Thistlethwayte had a long purse, and did not care how deeply his young bride dipped into it. She dipped into it very deeply, for she squandered sovereigns as if they were shillings. “ The only thing to do with money is to spend it,” was her philosophy.

From Homburg the couple moved on to Baden, and then travelled in leisurely fashion through Switzerland and Italy, finishing up with some weeks in Paris. On returning to London, they established themselves in Grosvenor Square, where

Mr. Thistlethwayte had a big house at No. 15. They entertained there on a considerable scale. At first people went to see them more out of curiosity than anything else, for they were anxious to discover if matrimony had altered the Laura Bell they had known in her Wilton Crescent era. They found that it had, and that, while she was glad to welcome them, she insisted on the observance of a rigidly correct standard of decorum. Once this was understood, she contrived to assemble round her dinner-table a number of distinguished guests, among whom may be mentioned the Duke of Devonshire, the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Novar, and Sir William Vernon Harcourt. But it is significant that the gatherings were almost entirely masculine, for women who moved in Society were chary about responding to her advances.

Nearly all the volumes of social memoirs dealing with this period of London life and manners have references to Mrs. Thistlethwayte. Two passages of interest to the historian, the first from *More Uncensored Recollections* and the second from *Tracks of a Rolling Stone*, are as follows :

I had been lunching at her house in Grosvenor Square, and the atmosphere was one of the most intense respectability. It was a very hot day in June, and Mrs. Thistlethwayte had on a dress which showed the famous and still beautiful shoulders. She asked me if I thought Sam Lewis would let her have some money to help a friend, and I looked at the historic shoulders and said, 'Yes, Mrs. Thistlethwayte, I am certain he will if you will only go dressed as you are now.' She smiled ; understood, and took my advice. Sam saw the shoulders and signed the cheque. He liked to look at beautiful things, even if he could never hope to possess them.

A man whom I had known from my school days, Frederick

Thistlethwayte, coming into a huge fortune when a subaltern in a marching regiment, had impulsively married a certain Miss Laura Bell. In her early days, when she made her first appearance in London and in Paris, Laura Bell's extraordinary beauty was as much admired by painters as by men of the world. . . . Her Irish wit and sparkling merriment, her cajolery, her good nature, and her feminine artifice, were attractions which, in the eyes of the male sex, fully atoned for her youthful indiscretions. My intimacy with both Mr. and Mrs. Thistlethwayte extended over many years ; and it is but justice to her memory to aver that, to the best of my belief, no wife was ever more faithful to her husband.

Although her fidelity was unquestioned, the marriage was not an unmixed success. The trouble between the pair was money.

Augustus Thistlethwayte was both rich and generous. His generosity, however, had its limits. These were reached by his wife, whose extravagance was such that she was soon heavily in debt. In the year 1870, when she had run up bills for £25,000, her husband undertook to make her an allowance for "pin money," and she undertook, "on her word of honour," not to contract any more debts. Although the agreement was in writing, Mrs. Thistlethwayte ignored it. The result was, in 1878, Mr. Thistlethwayte's solicitors were instructed to draw up a circular notice, of which it is said 4,000 copies (obviously a misprint for 40) were sent to the various firms with which she dealt, declaring that "she has not now, and has not for many years past, had any authority whatever to pledge her husband's credit. She is," added this notice, "in receipt of a sufficient and regularly paid allowance for her personal necessities."

Notwithstanding this injunction, and her own promise to observe it, Mrs. Thistlethwayte continued to order goods, and a number of pushful tradesmen continued to supply them, feeling that her husband would rather settle their bills than be sued. He preferred, however, to be sued; and in 1878 he successfully resisted an action that was brought against him to recover a considerable sum.

The plaintiffs were a firm of West End milliners, and their claim amounted to nearly £1,000 for bonnets and shawls and other feminine fripperies. Some of the items and their cost considerably astonished the learned judge. The proprietor of the firm, however, "Mr. Aaron Schwaebe, a gentleman of Hebraic extraction, trading as 'Madame Rosalie,'" protested with much vigour that his charges were strictly moderate. He also informed the jury that he knew several ladies of fashion who actually had as little as £500 a year to spend on cutting a dash."

Mrs. Thistlethwayte herself supported the view that her dress allowance, which had been fixed at this latter figure, was not enough for her requirements. "Anybody with sense," she declared, "would understand that it is altogether inadequate." Mr. Thistlethwayte, however, demurred. He also said that, after settling many bills incurred without his permission, he had expressly forbidden his wife to pledge his credit. "She has not," he told the Attorney-General, who examined him, "with my sanction gone into such society as would render the £500 a year she has from me inadequate for her wardrobe. As a matter of fact, she does not go into good society at all. If," he added, "she had dressed herself in accordance with my wishes, it would have been in a quiet and humble fashion.

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Unfortunately, I have not much influence with her in this direction."

On being cross-examined by Mr. Sergeant Parry, representing "Madame Rosalie," Mr. Thistlethwayte was compelled to make some curious disclosures as to his domestic troubles in Grosvenor Square. A skeleton he would have kept hidden was dragged out of the cupboard.

"Have not men of rank and fashion frequently visited your wife?" he was asked.

"If so, they forced themselves upon me," was the answer. "They did not come at my invitation. I did not kick them out by the front door, but I did once order everybody who had come to dinner unasked by me to leave the house. That was in 1856."

"And you were married in 1852?"

"Yes."

"Then that would be four years after your marriage," declared learned counsel, with the air of solving an abstruse mathematical problem.

The Attorney-General, for Mr. Thistlethwayte, told the jury that the greatest curse of the present day was extravagance in dress on the part of ladies. Mrs. Thistlethwayte, he added solemnly, "appears to have a passion for such wretched vanities, and it is most improper that her husband should be expected to meet the bills thus incurred."

Lord Coleridge, in his summing-up, also pointed a moral, "and condemned with warmth the frivolous and shocking expenditure of money to which the firm bringing the action had pandered." The jury, agreeing with him, awarded judgment and costs to the defendant.

Although the action attracted a good deal of publicity, it appeared to have been missed by one "business house"; and in 1881 another attempt was made to induce Mr. Thistlethwayte to settle a fresh debt incurred by his wife. As previously, however, he preferred to go into court, where he successfully resisted the effort to hold him responsible.

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While it was a little before the time of Messrs. Moody and Sankey, and General Booth and his Salvation Army had not yet become prominent, the 'sixties saw a wave of revivalism spreading through the country; and all sorts of people were discovering an outlet for their superfluous energies in occupying pulpits and delivering "words in season" and "messages." Beyond the fact that they themselves had distinctly lurid "pasts," some of these self-appointed and amateur evangelists possessed scant claims to be accepted as shepherds. Conspicuous among such was a certain Mr. Brownlow North, a brother of Lord Guildford. "In his youth," says a personal friend, "he had led a life of extreme dissipation and self-indulgence, but had suddenly awakened to a sense of the iniquity of his life, and had been converted. He was possessed of a great power of language. He spoke extremely well and with great pathos; and thousands of people in Scotland followed him, and went from all parts of the country to hear him."

A report of this gentleman's new (and rather late in the day) activities was published in an Inverness journal during the autumn of 1862:

This well-known lay preacher officiated in the East and

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West Churches on Sunday. Long before the hour of meeting, these large buildings were crowded ; every available spot, passage, lobby, and stairs where standing-room could be obtained was occupied ; while hundreds had to leave without securing admission. Mr. North preached last night in the Free High Church, and is to officiate in the East Church on Sunday first at two o'clock, and in the West Church at half-past six. At both diets of worship a collection will be made in aid of the Lancashire operatives.

Laura Bell had sprung one surprise on her friends of the Wilton Crescent days when she abandoned temporary unions for a permanent one and started a fresh career as a married woman. She sprang a second and bigger one on them, however, when, a couple of years after settling down in Grosvenor Square, she suddenly "got religion." The responsible factor is said to have been the example set her by Mr. North. While this is mere guess-work, what is definite is that, when she did make the change, she adopted no half-measures.

Believing devoutly in her "call" (which her husband does not appear to have shared), Mrs. Thistletonwayte had plenty of courage. It was wanted, too, for, remembering her distinctly hectic "past," the people whom she addressed did not always accept her sudden "conversion" as genuine. She began by driving up in a carriage and pair to the big shops in the West End, and, when a smirking assistant enquired, "What is your pleasure, madam ?" would slip a tract into his hand. She would also interview the heads of firms, and ask permission for the young men and women behind their counters to come to prayer-meetings in Grosvenor Square. When she wanted a larger audience, she would hire a hall at the Polytechnic and "hold forth" there by the hour.

Mrs. F. Thistlethwayte [says the anonymous author of *Fifty Years of London Society*] was one of my earliest recollections, and I never pass through Grosvenor Square without glancing at the house which for so long was "Laura's" home. She was one of the most remarkable women of the latter part of the nineteenth century. Her intellectual capacity was almost phenomenal, and to this was added a very poetical imagination. The artistic element in her nature and her generous impulsiveness culminated in her development into an ardent missionary. One of my friends, feeling some doubt as to her power as a lay preacher, went to hear her address a crowded audience at the old Polytechnic. Great was his astonishment when, instead of giving a rhapsodical recitation of the familiar description, Mrs. Thistlethwayte delivered an address consecutive in its argument, and, granting her premises, brilliantly illustrative. . . . "Laura's" religious fervour did not cause her to drift into lugubrious asceticism. Her appearance on the platform of the Polytechnic was a realisation of beauty and art. She had fair hair, luminous, glittering eyes, and a superb figure. Her dress on these occasions was of black silk, and her sympathetic, pleading voice never failed to stir even those who were most unwilling to yield to the influence of a woman speaker.

This impression was shared by others of her audience. "No one," says somebody else who "sat under" her, "was inclined to doubt the thoroughness with which she embarked upon her chosen work; and she attracted to these gatherings quite a number of prominent individuals. Gifted with the most complete self-possession, a deep rich contralto voice, modulated with considerable skill and tact, and supported by that dramatic faculty without some share of which any public appearance falls flat, Mrs. Thistlethwayte was well qualified for the part she had assumed. . . . As a mere study of character, she furnished a remarkable example of the triumph to be

effected over circumstances. She proved convincingly that intelligent earnestness is more than a match for any touch of the ludicrous which is to be met with in the unconventional, the exceptional, and the peculiar."

Mrs. Thistylethwayte also "held forth" on occasions at the Literary and Scientific Institution in Edward Street, Portman Square. There her success was no less pronounced. "By uplifted, appealing eyes, by outstretched arms, by rapid pacings to and fro on the little platform, she fully realised the notion of a feminine enthusiast who felt herself entrusted by the Almighty with the discharge of a prescribed duty upon earth. She was attired in an elegant black silk dress, with plain white collar and cuffs. In her anxiety to save souls she could, she said, 'go on until to-morrow morning'; and, from the flow of language at her command, all who heard her were convinced that she did not over-estimate her powers."

The fair evangelist's distinctly lurid "past" was a matter of common knowledge to the audiences at these gatherings. To do her justice, she made no effort to hide it. Still, there were moments when the knowledge proved a little disturbing to the harmony of a prayer-meeting. In his *Fifty Years of Fleet Street*, an account of what she had to put up with on such occasions is given by Sir John Robinson :

A well-known preacher in her day was the notorious Laura Bell, who, having married a young scion of the aristocracy, turned pious in her maturer years, and was particularly interested in the work of reclaiming young women. Mr. Gladstone believed in her, and was more than once present at her meetings. Her manner was pleasant, but there was very little thought in anything she said. She was always very elegantly

dressed, and lived in good style. At a midnight meeting on one occasion an incident happened that rather disconcerted her. She was speaking of the folly of a life of sin, when a girl called out : "Come, come, Laura, anyway *you* haven't done so badly."

This was a palpable hit.

But the conducting of Gospel-meetings in her Grosvenor Square drawing-room, or at the Literary and Scientific Institution (where, by the way, the audience was always carefully selected), was not the limit of Mrs. Thistlewayte's soul-saving efforts. She even went the length of addressing ribald crowds in Hyde Park on Sunday afternoons. A well-known peer tells a story of the first time he found her there thus employed. Walking near the Marble Arch, he says, he was astonished to see an inconspicuously attired, quiet-looking lady suddenly stand on a bench and offer up a prayer. As the gathering which this somewhat unusual episode attracted was lacking in sympathy and began to heckle her, she got rather frightened. Thereupon, this chance listener edged himself to the front, and offered his escort should she wish to return home. "She gladly accepted my suggestion," he says, "and told me that her name was Mrs. Thistlewayte, and that she lived in Grosvenor Square. On the way back there in a cab, she talked about religion, and begged me to call, in order that her husband might thank me for my help."

(5)

Mrs. Thistlewayte's new activities were not bounded by Grosvenor Square, the Polytechnic, and the Park. She took them with her when she left London in August for the

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Highlands, where her husband, who was fond of shooting, had a moor near Fort William, and also rented another one, with a deer forest and a stretch of salmon river, at Loch Luichart, not far from Dingwall. There she preached, not only to the sportsmen, but also to the crofters and ghillies.

In her *Memories of Fifty Years*, Lady St. Helier has some interesting recollections of the erstwhile Laura Bell at this period. She spells her married name, however, in a fresh fashion :

About the same time that Mr. Brownlow North was rousing the country by his revival meetings, a very powerful rival appeared on the scene in the person of Mrs. Thistletonwaite (the celebrated Laura Bell), who, having married a Mr. Thistletonwaite, a man of large fortune, had come with her husband to Loch Luichart, a deer forest belonging to my uncle, Lord Ashburton, which they had taken for a term of years.

At first the county looked askance at the new arrivals, and she was not visited. Rumours which reached my grandmother's ears of her extreme repentance and great spiritual gifts, backed up by an entreaty from my aunt, Lady Ashburton, that she would recognise her tenant, produced a great sensation in our family ; and, after many consultations and heartburnings, my grandmother consented, in order to please my aunt, to receive Mrs. Thistletonwaite. We children were all sent out of the house the day when she paid her first visit, and only gathered from the mysterious whisperings of the maidservants that someone who ought not to have come to the house had been there, and that we had been sent out of the way to avoid meeting her.

The wave of revivalism had touched her also, and, to the surprise of everyone, an announcement was one day made that Mrs. Thistletonwaite would conduct a revival meeting in the little Free Church building which stood just outside the

grounds of Loch Luichart. The services were not very well attended at first, for, except the local minister, the Free Church people looked shyly at their new recruit. But after a time curiosity got the better of discretion, and people flocked from all parts of the country to hear her discourse.

The internal surroundings of the church did not lend themselves to any emotional effect, but Mrs. Thistlethwaite, beautifully dressed, and standing at the end of the building, so that all the light which entered through the small windows was thrown on her, illuminating the spot where she stood, poured out an impassioned address, not eloquent nor convincing, but certainly effective. She spoke with great facility, and with a good deal of emotion in her voice, and an evident air of sincerity and personal conviction. This, added to the remains of very great beauty, and influence largely increased by her great generosity to the poor people, made a vast impression on her congregation, and after the first meetings she succeeded in producing all the effects of other revival preachers, and many conversions were supposed to have been the result of her ministrations.

Had she been content with her success in the mountain recesses of Ross-shire, she might have been handed down to posterity as a sainted Magdalene. But, not satisfied with her minor triumphs, she appeared one Sunday in the county town of Dingwall, and, in defiance of the warnings of the Free Church minister there, attempted to hold a large meeting, which was not a success. The crowded congregation was attracted more from curiosity than religious ardour; and, after a second attempt, during which time she was exposed to the uncontrolled criticism of the minister and the elders, she contented herself with her Sunday meetings among the hills. She was a very striking-looking woman, and the large black mantilla which covered her masses of golden hair, the magnificent jewels she wore round her neck, and the flashing rings on the hands with which she gesticulated, added to the soft tones of a very beautiful voice, made a great impression on those who listened to her.

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She was joined afterwards by Lord and Lady Kintore, Lord Kintore being a very religious man, and he and Mrs. Thistletonwaite conducted services for many weeks ; but the conversions of which they boasted were not many, nor, I fear, very permanent.

As an item of “Fashionable Intelligence,” a Ross-shire journal (this time spelling her name correctly) printed the following in the autumn of 1862 :

Mrs. Thistletonwaite preached at the Free Church of Garve on Sunday week to an immense assemblage. The congregation was composed of people of all classes, but chiefly of the more intelligent ; it was estimated that there were about forty carriages in attendance.

Fearing, perhaps, a measure of competition that might prove serious to them, this assumption of the rôle of an amateur evangelist and the occupancy of the pulpit of a brother “meenister” were severely frowned upon by two of the local clergy, the Rev. Dr. Begg and the Rev. John Kennedy. Dr. Begg, indeed, felt so strongly on the subject that he published a letter, in which he indulged in some sly (and distinctly uncharitable) digs at Mrs. Thistletonwaite’s expense :

Surely there is room enough for the energies of Christian women without their intruding into pulpits ; and we are convinced that the truth cannot but suffer in the long run from any proceedings which set at defiance the authority of the Divine word. It is no doubt well to see the higher classes converted, and manifesting an interest in the conversion of others—and this is all the more pleasing in the case of such as have made a great moral transition themselves—but the genuineness of conversion is tested by humility as well as by zeal.

The Rev. Mr. Kennedy, for his part, did more than write to the papers. Shutting himself up in his manse, he studied St. Paul's Epistles to the Corinthians and to Timothy, and then prepared a discourse which he delivered to his parishioners on the following Sunday at Dingwall. It was very long, and very severe ; and also somewhat involved. The gist of it, however, may be gathered from the concluding passage :

“ Finally, my brethren, the order of creation and the order of transgression determine that woman's proper place in the House of God shall be a subordinate one. Woman followed man in being, but she led man in sinning. As a creature, she was after him and of him, but, as a transgressor, she was before him. In deference, therefore, to the due order of the Creator's work, and as a brand on the sex that was first involved in sin, subjection and silence in our churches are properly imposed on women.”

Mrs. Thistlethwayte did not accept these theological strictures without remonstrance. On reading a report of the sermon, she sent a letter to the editor of the paper in which it appeared :

Loch Luichart, Dingwall, N.B.

October 4th, 1862.

DEAR SIR,—You will favour the cause of truth by kindly stating in your next report that I have *not* appeared in any pulpit here. At the request of many, I have, through grace, humbly declared the plan of salvation by faith in a risen Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ—my object being to enlighten the poor, not the rich. Dr. Begg and Mr. Kennedy are both ignorant as to what the true Church of Christ is founded upon. It certainly is not brick and mortar, but living stones, bought with the precious blood of a Lamb without blemish. Also, I

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beg to state that my calling is not to preach, but to win immortal souls through the Gospel message. . . . Dr. Begg and Mr. Kennedy, I regret, have not obeyed St. Paul's command in his Epistle to the Philippians, iv. 3, nor can they be enlightened upon the last chapter of the Romans. . . . No delicate-minded woman would ever think of speaking save in the assembly of the blood-bought people ; it is the true Church, and there she *must* speak.

The unworthy writer quite forgives the gentlemen who have caused her name to appear in the public paper and will pray that they may be filled with charity and the truth as it is in Jesus. A sinner saved by grace through faith in the Lamb of God.

L. THISTLETHWAYTE.

Dr. Begg ignored this protest. The Rev. Mr. Kennedy, however, answered it in the following vigorous fashion :

Mrs. Thistlethwayte may be of opinion that the passages of Scripture, which she quotes in her own defence, do justify her preaching ; but her thinking so very plainly proves that she is not yet qualified to give lessons in theology to Dr. Begg. . . . Sorry would I be to repress the Scriptural development of a Christian lady's zeal, but neither do I like to see it misdirected ; and while I am quite disposed to "help those women who labour with me in the Gospel," I feel assured that I would injure both their own spiritual interests and the cause of the Gospel if I encouraged them to "speak in the Churches."

JOHN KENNEDY.

Sir William Hardman, the Rabelaisian diarist of the 'sixties, who knew most people, knew Mrs. Thistlethwayte, both as Laura Bell and after she was married. For many years it was his custom every month to send a friend living out of England a piquant commentary on London life and manners. In one of these letters he refers to the fair "revivalist" as follows :

I have no reason to doubt of the quondam prostitute's sincerity, for I believe her conduct is most scrupulously correct, and her whole existence is given up to prayer and doing good to the poor. . . . Is it not strange to recall the time when she was Queen of London w—dom, and had the Nepalese Ambassador in her meshes? But I have lived almost long enough to cease to wonder at anything.

It is to Mrs. Thistletonwayte's credit that, despite the covert sneers and jeers of those who had known her under other and very different circumstances, she stuck to her self-appointed mission of spreading "the word" to all who would listen. A sporting baronet, Sir Willoughby Maycock, after referring to her as "one of the frailest, yet most beautiful women of the Victorian era," acknowledged the undoubted magnetism she exercised :

I well remember taking my late lamented mother to hear her preach at the Polytechnic in the summer of 1874, where she drew packed houses. She was getting on in years then, and inclining to the obese. But the lustre of her beautiful eyes, her most distinguishing feature, was only surpassed by the sparkling of an array of large diamond rings which adorned her fingers, as she raised her hands in eloquent exhortation to her audience to follow the path that alone leads to salvation ; and she impressed us both with the sincerity of her conviction.

(6)

Mrs. Thistletonwayte's married life lasted for just on thirty years. As a whole, it was a happy enough one, even if Mr. Thistletonwayte, who preferred race-meetings to prayer-meetings, did not share in her religious activities, and (although he sent them subscriptions) Exeter Hall and the

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Polytechnic never saw him. He was a keen sportsman, fond of hunting and shooting and fishing, and his instincts were hospitable. He had his own friends, and his wife had hers. They did not interfere with one another.

Yet, all unsuspected, and very suddenly, tragedy was to come to the big house in Grosvenor Square. One Sunday evening, in August 1887, Mr. Thistletonwayte, who slept in a room by himself, went up to bed as usual. Towards midnight a shot rang out, shattering the stillness. The startled servants, hurrying to see what had happened, were confronted by a locked door. Bursting it open, they discovered their master, a huddled heap on the floor, a bullet wound in his head, a revolver clenched in his hand.

A doctor was summoned, but nothing could be done. Augustus Thistletonwayte was beyond any help that the entire pharmacopœia could give him.

Forty years ago society reporters were less pushful than they are now, and the news of the tragedy was kept a secret for some days. Then, when it did leak out, only scanty particulars, served up in a single paragraph, were offered the public :

"We regret," said an evening journal, "to record the death, from an accident which occurred at his residence in Grosvenor Square on Sunday night, of Mr. Augustus Frederick Thistletonwayte. It appears, from such particulars as we have gathered, that the deceased gentleman was in the habit of keeping a fully loaded revolver on a shelf by his bedside ; and that, being suddenly seized with giddiness, he had stumbled against this, knocking down the weapon, and causing it to explode with fatal result to himself."

This convenient theory was accepted, and there was no

inquest. Still, people talked ; and it was not remarkable to find the death described as "having occurred under very singular circumstances."

Widowhood affected Laura Thistlethwayte in a fresh fashion. Much of her husband's property had been left to a younger brother, but a sum of nearly £100,000 had been settled on herself. Being thus well provided for, she determined to give up the Grosvenor Square mansion and retire to a more secluded district. The one she selected was Hampstead, where she built a pleasant house, which she called Woodbine Cottage, with a big garden and paddock. She took with her there her religious fervour. This, if anything, increased with the passing years.

"Among the residents of West End Green," says the author of *Annals of Hampstead*, "was Mrs. Thistlethwayte. The lady was, or had been, a celebrated beauty. Her maiden name was Laura Bell. She was one of two beautiful sisters, natives of Belfast, and of humble parentage. The other sister, Myra, was on the stage in the 'sixties, and much admired for her personal charm, though not of such striking beauty as Mrs. Thistlethwayte. According to contemporary accounts, Laura must have been astonishingly lovely. After a few years of varied and romantic society prominence, she married Mr. Henry [sic] Thistlethwayte, a wealthy man who predeceased her by several years. After his death, she lived in retirement at a very pretty house standing in its own grounds, near the corner of what is now Fortune Green Road and West End Lane, immediately opposite West End Green. . . . Mrs. Thistlethwayte was a liberal subscriber to local charities, took a great interest in the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and was

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often observed walking up and down a raised walk in her garden, wringing her hands with vexation and grief at seeing horses pulling heavy loads up the steep incline past her house."

Laura Thistlethwayte survived her husband by seven years, dying in the summer of 1894, at the age of sixty-five. She had lived so long out of the world, where once she had been such a conspicuous figure, that her name had become little more than a memory. The result was, very few notices of her death appeared. A Society organ, however, had the following paragraph :

A familiar and once well-known lady passed away last week at her residence in Hampstead. Mrs. Thistlethwayte's name does not convey very much to the present younger generation ; but to those whose memories carry them back for thirty years no name was better known, and no hospitality was more munificently dispensed than that of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Thistlethwayte, both in Grosvenor Square and in the Scotch home where they always went for the shooting season. For many years past Mrs. Thistlethwayte devoted herself to good works, and no one who ever heard her preach will be likely to forget how impressive and eloquent she was. Since her husband's death, Mrs. Thistlethwayte nearly always resided at her lovely suburban home, Woodbine Cottage, Hampstead ; where, when she felt strong enough, she received a large circle of friends. A very clever woman, with a wonderful flow of conversation, she had to the last the power of attracting clever men of the day. Mr. Gladstone was one of her greatest admirers, and he and Mrs. Gladstone passed a good deal of their time at Woodbine Cottage of late years. Mrs. Thistlethwayte declined to increase her circle, although many were anxious to be included in it who undoubtedly might be called brilliant and exclusive. She was a beautiful woman with a distinct personality.

In contrast with this another organ, *The World*, had a somewhat vulgar and venomously inspired obituary of Mrs. Thistlethwayte :

That name was coupled (with caustic candour) by the street ballad-mongers with that of the handsome young Nepalese Prince Jung Bahadur. The young woman's portrait was in all the shops, her sayings, and, still more, her doings, in everybody's mouth. After a few seasons, a wealthy young masher thought fit to amuse the town by marrying Miss Bell, who, as Mrs. Thistlethwayte, played the part of Maddalena Penitente very prettily, preaching, distributing tracts in the parks, lecturing to young girls at Craven Chapel and to the young shopmen of large firms—when the principals would admit so elegantly dressed a preacher. After the tragical death, by accident, of her husband in Grosvenor Square, Mrs. Thistlethwayte retired to her Hampstead cottage, where, like Handel's Theodora, "clad in robes of virgin white," she might be seen going to and fro, active at the adjacent church and schools, engaged in good works, and where her presence will be much missed. She had completely realised the possibility of woman, equally with man, rising on stepping-stones of a dead self to higher things, and of living down an unenviable reputation.

Although true enough, it might have been put more charitably, for, with all her faults, Laura Bell had much to her credit. With even the best of us, "the measure of virtue is the measure of temptation." When the balance is struck, it is as well to remember this.

EDITH CAREW

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(1)

WILKIE COLLINS invented a “Woman in White.” Edith Carew invented a “Woman in Black.” Of the two, this latter was the greater mystery.

For people who want to discover one, a fairly close parallel exists between the case of Mrs. Carew, which happened at Yokohama in 1896, and that of Mrs. Maybrick, which happened at Liverpool in 1889. Each had points in common, and revolved round the “eternal triangle.” Thus, a married couple of good social position, living “double lives”; the husband dying suddenly; a coroner’s inquest; and a widow convicted of administering arsenic. Also, anonymous letters and circumstantial evidence. In short, dramas of passion and poison, culminating in tragedy.

It was at a hunt ball, in the spring of 1889, that Edith Porch, the daughter of Mr. James Porch, a prosperous merchant and Mayor of Glastonbury, first met her future husband. This was Walter Raymond Hallowell Carew, son of Major Carew, of Exmouth. He was then thirty-six, and Edith Porch was fifteen years younger.

The wooing was a quick one, for the two were engaged after they had only met twice. Mr. and Mrs. Porch advanced a certain amount of opposition, for their daughter was something of an heiress, since she had £500 a year of her own,

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while Walter Carew had little beyond "expectations." However, as the couple were obviously very much in love with each other, they permitted the marriage to take place. Shortly afterwards, Carew accepted a commercial appointment in Singapore ; and, as it carried a good salary, his wife accompanied him there.

At first all went well ; and Edith Carew, charmed and interested with the novelty of her surroundings, enjoyed herself to the full. Then, after two children had been born, she found the exile becoming wearisome. The subject of returning to England was often discussed, and it was practically settled that she should go home on a prolonged visit. Suddenly, however, Carew was offered an attractive position in Japan ; and, his wife feeling the want of a change, they left for Yokohama.

Edith Carew did not regret her decision. She found the land of chrysanthemums and cherry-blossoms much more attractive than the Straits Settlements. Also, the climate was much better. The European community in Yokohama, where they had a pleasant house on the Bluff, was a friendly one ; and there was no lack of excursions, picnics, dances, and dinner-parties, etc., together with tennis and yachting. Mrs. Carew, with her good looks and charm, was extremely popular ; and Walter Carew, with his cheerful disposition, his social gifts, and his prowess at games was asked to become secretary and manager of the United Club, where all the Europeans foregathered. This appointment, it is interesting to note in the light of what followed, was largely due to the personal recommendation of Mr. John Lowder, a barrister practising in Yokohama.

(2)

Thus the years passed until the autumn of 1896. At this date, in addition to Mr. and Mrs. Carew and their family, a boy of five and a girl of six, the household consisted of Mrs. Carew's brother, Reginald Porch, who had come out to the Far East on a visit, and Mary Esther Jacob, the children's nursery governess. This young woman belonged to the same part of England as Mrs. Carew, and had known her before her marriage.

To outward observers, the Carews appeared a thoroughly devoted couple. Still, little rifts manifested themselves occasionally. The cause was largely a financial one. Walter Carew had hospitable instincts. He liked to entertain lavishly, and to keep open house. As this meant spending much more than he earned, a considerable part of his wife's private income was absorbed.

Another matter that tended to upset the domestic harmony from time to time was the fact that Mr. and Mrs. Carew had the defects of their qualities. They were, if anything, both too popular. If Walter Carew were a "ladies' man," Edith Carew was very much a "man's woman." She liked admiration, and she got a great deal of it. Conspicuous among her friends of the opposite sex was a certain Mr. Henry Dickinson, a young bank clerk who had charge of the ledger in which her account was kept. The intimacy had begun in a platonic enough fashion, and, so far as Mrs. Carew was concerned, it would probably have stopped there. But this was not enough for the other, and, finding her reception of his overtures not altogether unresponsive, he proceeded from finance to romance.

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After a time, young Dickinson formed the impression, from the hints and half-confidences she gave him, that Edith Carew was ill-treated or at any rate "misunderstood" by her husband. The thought filled him with fury. The pathetic face and pleading voice of the woman he had admired beyond all others kept coming between himself and his work. He began to write to her—warm, ardent letters, full of devotion and a desire to be of service. Their recipient tore them up, and threw them into her waste-paper basket.

It was an action to bring unexpected and tragic consequences. Although he did not know how far it had gone, Walter Carew was quite aware of the young clerk's intimacy with his wife. But he appeared to look upon it from a tolerant standpoint. At any rate, he did nothing to stop it. Perhaps he thought that his wife was entitled to "have her fling." He had had one himself, for he happened to have a "past." This was connected with a Miss Annie Luke, a girl with whom, years earlier, he had had an "understanding" in his bachelor days. He had, however, not attempted to conceal this intimacy from his wife ; and she, for her part, had always affected to regard it as of no consequence. As she said, when they discussed the matter, the Annie Luke episode had come to nothing ; the woman had gone out of her husband's life, and, since his marriage, they had never met or corresponded.

Yet the shadow of Annie Luke was responsible for the tragedy that was to follow.

(3)

It was in the autumn of 1896 that the long forgotten name of Annie Luke first cropped up in Yokohama. One evening Mrs.

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Carew went down to the club, and casually remarked to her husband that a woman had called that afternoon and enquired for him.

"She didn't give her name," she said, "and all I saw of her was that she was heavily veiled and dressed in black."

"A 'Woman in Black,'" said Carew reflectively. "It sounds mysterious. Did she leave any message?"

"No, but she left a card for you. It has nothing on it except some initials."

"What initials?"

"'A. L.'"

Walter Carew felt vaguely disturbed at the announcement. 'A. L.' could be nobody but Annie Luke. They had not met for years. What on earth did she want with him now? And why had she come to Japan after this long interval? Also, why had she not left an address at which he could get into touch with her?

A couple of days passed without anything more happening. Then he was told that the "Woman in Black" had paid another call during his absence, and had left a second card for him. This one merely had scribbled on it "M. J. and A. L."

The puzzle had increased. "A. L.," of course, was Annie Luke. But who on earth was "M. J."? The only person he could think of with such initials was Mary Jacob, his children's governess and an inmate of his household. Therefore, these initials must belong to somebody else.

He was still puzzling over the card, and wondering what it meant, when a letter was delivered to him at the club:

I *must* see you. Why have you done nothing since you got

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my two cards? Or perhaps she never let you get them. I cannot meet her again. She makes me mad, when I think of what I might have done for you. I cannot give you any address. I am living wherever I can find shelter; but you can find me and help me if you will, as I know you will for the sake of old times.

ANNIE.

On the off chance of getting into touch with her, Walter Carew went round to the shipping offices and enquired if any such person had arrived or left by the mail. As her name was not on any of the passenger-lists, he addressed a letter to Miss Luke at the *poste-restante*:

I feel greatly upset about you, and, ever since I got your card last Saturday, I have been endeavouring to find you. I wish to, and will, help you if I can only find you. Meet me this evening at 5.30 p.m. on the Bund, opposite the Club Hotel.

W.

The appointment was not kept. Nor did Carew ever know if his message had been received, for the next day he felt ill and stopped in bed.

From the first, Mrs. Carew did all that could be expected of a devoted and anxious wife. Thus, although her husband declared that he was suffering from nothing more than a bilious attack or a touch of the sun, she insisted on sending for a medical man, Dr. Wheeler. By him the case was diagnosed as stomachic inflammation, and a simple remedy was prescribed. It appeared to be beneficial in its results. Suddenly, however, there was a relapse; and Dr. Wheeler felt so disturbed that he called in a brother practitioner, and had the

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patient taken to hospital. Within a couple of hours of his admission, Walter Carew was dead.

All the members of the British community at Yokohama were deeply shocked when they heard of Walter Carew's death. They were, however, soon to have a still greater shock. This was caused by the action of Dr. Wheeler in going to the coroner and demanding that a post-mortem should be conducted.

Although he recognised he was running counter to popular opinion, which held that he was causing the widow unnecessary distress, Dr. Wheeler felt that he had very good grounds for withholding a certificate. He had not mentioned it to anyone, except the coroner, but a dreadful suspicion had been disturbing him ever since the patient's relapse. What, however, specially disturbed him was that a mysterious note, reading "Three bottles of arsenic in one week—Maruya," had been pushed under his door. As Maruya was the name of a Japanese chemist in Yokohama, he had gone there and examined the entries in the poisons-book. Having done so, he was astonished to hear that this firm had supplied Mrs. Carew with a considerable quantity of arsenic.

Enquiries in other directions elicited the fact that this purchase of arsenic was known to Miss Jacob, the governess. Miss Jacob had discussed the matter with a friend, Elsa Christoffel; and Elsa Christoffel had spoken about it to her employer, Mr. Charles Dunlop, a leading merchant in the town. The next thing that happened was that Mr. Dunlop had taken it upon himself to give Dr. Wheeler a hint that there might be something untoward afoot.

"Of course," he said, "it may be nothing more than girls'

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gossip. Still, as poor Carew was your patient, you might care to look into it for yourself."

"Thanks," said the doctor, "I mean to."

Arsenic! Dr. Wheeler began to see daylight. Various symptoms in the dead man's illness that had been puzzling him did so no longer. He went off at once to consult Mrs. Carew. In answer to his questions, she told him quite frankly that her husband had been treating himself with arsenic for a complaint that he had kept private.

"Why didn't you tell me of this when you first sent for me?"

"I'm afraid it didn't occur to me. Poor Walter's illness drove everything else out of my head."

But it put something into her visitor's head, and he went off to see Mr. Carey Hall, the coroner. As a result of what he was told, that official ordered an inquest to be held.

(4)

Things proceeded swiftly. Walter Carew had died on October 22nd, and the inquest opened two days later. Mrs. Carew, dressed in deep mourning, and accompanied by one of her friends, Mr. Lowder, a barrister, was obviously much affected. Everybody was full of sympathy for her and her tragically sudden widowhood.

Important medical evidence was given by Dr. Wheeler. Mr. Carew's symptoms, he said, had made him suspect poisoning, and it was on this account that he had had him removed to hospital. He could not, however, state the actual cause of death unless a post-mortem were held. The next witness, Miss Jacob, had something very odd to tell the

coroner. This was that when she called at the shop of Maruya, the Japanese chemist, to get some arsenic for Mrs. Carew, the assistant there had said to her: "Why so plenty much deadly poison wanted in your house?" On being questioned as to this, Mrs. Carew said that her husband had, for some years past, been in the habit of taking arsenic to relieve attacks of liver congestion, and that she had purchased it quite openly.

Much against his will, for he had naturally wished to keep in the background, Mrs. Carew's friend, Henry Dickinson, had been summoned by the coroner. His evidence was unimportant, except in two particulars. One was that the dead man had told him that he took arsenic; and the other was that he himself had noticed a "veiled woman, dressed in black," hovering about the club on the day that the person said to be Annie Luke had enquired for Walter Carew. He had not seen her since. Nor could he give a description of her appearance.

"Did your husband ever speak to you of anybody called Annie Luke?" Mrs. Carew was asked.

"Yes," was the frank reply. "He told me all about her. Shortly before his death, he said that he wished to make amends to her."

As everything centred round Annie Luke, a number of questions respecting this mysterious individual were put to Mrs. Carew. Her story was an odd one. On October the 10th, she said, while her husband was at the club, a strange woman called and enquired for him.

"What sort of a woman?" demanded a member of the jury.
"I could only see that she was tall and heavily veiled."

"Did you tell your husband?"

"I sent a note down to him at once. I also went to the club

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myself, and discussed it with him there. He was very puzzled, as he understood she was still in England."

On the coroner's suggestion, Mrs. Carew's note was read to the jury :

DEAREST WALTER,—A most mysterious lady (?) came here just now and asked to see Mr. Walter Carew. I told her you were not in, when she said she would call again early this evening, about 4.30, as she *must* see you. She would give no name, nor any reason for her visit. . . . Will you be back to see your "Woman in Black"? If not, what message shall I tell Rachel to give her? Enclosed is her card.

Yours,
EDITH.

The atmosphere of Yokohama seemed strangely full of anonymous letters, all purporting to have come from Miss Luke. First of all, there was the one to Mr. Carew ; then, after his death, there were others to Mrs. Carew ; and, finally, both Mr. Lowder and Mr. Hall had received similar missives. Those addressed to Mrs. Carew read as follows :

Beware! Dare to speak one word of the truth, and you shall never leave Japan alive.

and :

I have done what I can for you. True, I have made you suffer, but I have written to Mr. Hall and to Mr. Lowder. Yokohama will be troubled no more by A. L.

Odd as was this, the communication sent to Mr. Lowder was still more mysterious in tone :

I do not know you, but I gather from Saturday's papers that

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you are acting on behalf of the wife of the man who was to me the world, and more than the world.

Dead men tell no tales ; no, nor dead women either, for I am going to join him. Do you know what waiting means for eight long weary years ? I have watched and waited. Waited till I knew he would grow tired of her, that silly little fool. And then I came to him. What is the result ? We, between us, electrify Japan.

I have never pretended to be a good woman ; but, for the sake of a few lines, I do not see why I should let a silly innocent woman be condemned for what she knows nothing about. . . .

By the time you get this I shall be well on my way to join him, my twin soul. . . . I shall write to the coroner.

A. L.

The letter to the coroner was equally hysterical. If it meant anything, it meant that the writer contemplated suicide :

MR. HALL,—I have finished a letter to Mr. Lowder, so cannot begin this to you in quite the same way. Shall I begin with the truest and wisest saying on this earth, "Woman is at the bottom of everything." In this case—it is so, for, between us, we have bamboozled the lot of you (1) the chemist, (2) the doctor, and last, but not least, that fool his wife.

I shall stop here, because my last act on earth shall be a merciful one, and because I am going to join him, my twin soul. I will exonerate the little fool from any share in helping us to meet each other. I have done my work well, and I am taking good care to escape the lot of you and the law.

. . . The world will call me mad ; I am, however, sane enough to know what I have done, and what I am going to do ; and sane enough to accomplish my end—that as we were divided in life, we were not in death. I wonder whether, out of all this community, there is one who can sympathise with me who goes out to meet her Maker.

A. L.

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After this evidence had been given, the coroner adjourned the enquiry, and directed Dr. Divers, Professor of Chemistry at the University of Tokio, to make an analysis of certain of the dead man's organs. The result, which was awaited with profound interest, read as follows :

"I have come to the definite conclusion that the deceased died from the effects of arsenic, which was administered to him without his knowledge."

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While they now knew the cause of Walter Carew's death, the jury had still to discover who had been responsible for it. The anonymous letters, of course, pointed to this individual being Annie Luke. It seemed beyond question. The coroner, however, in his summing-up, made it clear that he had very strong doubts if such a woman even existed in Japan. Mrs. Carew, he reminded them, said she had seen her on October 10th. After that date, however, she had disappeared, and the most diligent search had failed to establish any trace of her. Yet on October 29th she had written to himself and to Mr. Lowder the letters they had heard read. Where, then, was she during the interval? Consequently, whoever it was that had administered arsenic to Walter Carew, he could not advise the jury to find that it was Annie Luke. With regard, however, to Mrs. Carew, there was no getting over the fact that she had obtained a quantity of arsenic from Maruya's shop. It had not been ordered by a doctor. Why, then, did she want it?

The problem before the jury was a difficult one. As the simplest way out of it, they returned an "open verdict." The

deceased, they said, had died from arsenical poisoning, but that there was "no direct evidence to show by whom it had been administered." This, of course, was an improper finding, for their verdict should have been based on the inadequacy, and not on the alleged "indirectness," of the evidence offered them.

Public opinion in Yokohama was very much against Mr. Coroner Hall ; and it was felt that he had acted with bias. All the sympathy was with Mrs. Carew, who had become a widow under such tragic circumstances. It was freely recognised, however, that the mystery of her husband's death would not be solved until Annie Luke was found. Mrs. Carew herself was so strongly of the opinion that she offered a substantial reward for her discovery, and inserted an advertisement to this effect in the local papers.

"Only find this woman for me," she said wistfully, "and you will find poor Walter's murderer."

There were plenty of volunteers to join in the hunt. All day long eager enquiries were made at the hotels and boarding-houses and hospitals, and shipping and tourist and railway offices. But a blank was drawn everywhere. Nobody had seen such a person as Annie Luke arrive ; and nobody had seen her leave. This, of course, was odd, for the number of English-women in the town was not so large that a stranger among them could come and go without attracting attention.

But the search did have one result. This took the form of another anonymous letter received by Mr. Lowder :

It never occurred to you, did it, that "my way" to join *him* might be by the French mail ? It never occurred to you, did it,

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that I can disguise myself as well as my name? It never occurred to you, did it, that you never could, and never would, find me? Who am I, and what is my name, eh? Is it "A.L." or "M.J." or was I, during my stay in Yokohama, passing under some other name, eh?

A. L.

Lowder, Esq.

Just a week after the coroner's enquiry had been held, Yokohama was to have a fresh sensation. This was nothing less than the arrest of Edith Carew on a charge of wilful murder.

(6)

The authorities lost no time in setting the scene for the second act of the drama that was now being unfolded. A couple of days after her arrest, Edith Carew was confronting Mr. James Troup, Assistant Judge of the Consular Court. At this investigation she had the services of two members of the local Bar, Mr. J. F. Lowder and Mr. A. B. Walford, while Mr. H. C. Litchfield, the Public Prosecutor, presented the case for the Crown.

The first witnesses called by Mr. Litchfield were Mary Jacob and Elsa Christoffel. Miss Jacob, it transpired, had not been on good terms with Mrs. Carew, and was under notice to leave her employment just before the tragedy. Considering that some of her letters from England were being improperly withheld, she had examined a waste-paper basket in one of the rooms. There she had found a number of torn-up scraps. Struck by their appearance, she took them to her friend, Miss Christoffel, who had stitched the fragments together.

"Why did you do that?" Miss Christoffel was asked.

"Because I thought it would be useful to my friend's character, if anything were ever said against it. The letters I put together would show that men were in the habit of paying visits to the house, and that these visits were not to Miss Jacob."

What Dr. Wheeler had to say was a repetition of what he had already said at the coroner's inquest. In cross-examination, he admitted that Mrs. Carew had exhibited much anxiety about her husband's symptoms, and had readily agreed that a second doctor should be consulted.

"What did she say," he was asked, "when you told her that you were removing her husband to hospital?"

"She said, 'Do you think it necessary?'"

Mr. Dickinson himself was subjected to a very bad hour in the witness-box, for he had to listen to the letters he had written to Mrs. Carew being read in public. Some of them made it clear that he had been on terms of remarkably close intimacy with her.

I cannot go to bed, my sweet, without writing a line which I shall deliver if I can before I go down. . . . My poor, dear darling. I knew you would suffer for yesterday, but it is revealed to me more than ever, dearest, how much I loved you, and how much you have become to me. . . . I love you utterly, my dear one, and the remembrance of yesterday will ever be with me.

My poor dear darling. I knew you would suffer for yesterday. I shall always hope that all this constant abuse of me will never cause you to look at me with other eyes than those you have now.

A second ran :

You ask me, dearest, to take time over answering your letter, and, in the same breath, to give it you at tiffin.

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. . . It is impossible to go back to the old footing. *He* has altered all that ; and, if you were a free woman, I would ask you to come to me. You know this. Long ago, when I first knew you, something of a passion for you would now and then come over me, and envy of the man who had *you* ; and now, when you are thoroughly estranged and have come to me for help, what I had easily checked before has risen again with a strength that is multiplied a thousandfold by the knowledge that now you love me.

Dearest, the scene of last night shall not take place again. We cannot help now, I think, loving. I know it is wrong, but you are not to blame, I think, so much as I, but for other sakes than ours the grosser sin shall be avoided.

There were also guarded references to the mysterious Annie Luke.

I have been thinking about your probably having to meet this woman. I wish for your sake that you could refuse to, but have come to think that you cannot well do so. Do you know anything against her ? If not, you should meet her I think.

A sensational occurrence marked this preliminary hearing. When the letters that had been put in as "exhibits" were being gathered together, one of them could not be found. Thereupon, the judge directed that the doors should be locked, and everybody set to work to look for the missing document. Mrs. Carew, who was sitting beside her counsel, also joined in the hunt. But it seemed to have vanished into thin air. During, however, the adjournment for luncheon, a police matron was instructed to search Mrs. Carew. The result was that the letter was discovered hidden in her coat cuff. When this was reported to her junior counsel, Mr. Walford, he

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returned his brief ; and the whole conduct of the defence was taken over by Mr. Lowder. Thereupon, Mr. Litchfield, the Crown Prosecutor, asked that she should be committed for trial by a jury. This course was adopted ; and Mrs. Carew, who had hitherto been on bail, was transferred in custody to the consular prison.

While, of course, indefensible, the reason of Mrs. Carew's anxiety to suppress this particular letter was not unnatural. It was one that had been written by Mr. Dickinson, and was declared to be "such as no modest woman who still retained fealty to her husband could accept."

(7)

The trial was held in the Supreme Court at Yokohama, before Mr. Justice Mowat and a jury. Mrs. Carew, dressed in deep mourning, and accompanied by her brother and a prison matron, drove up in a jinricksha.

The indictment ran as follows :

In her Britannic Majesty's Court for Japan, Kanagawa to wit, the 5th day of January, 1897. Henry Charles Litchfield, the Crown Prosecutor in Japan for Our Lady the Queen, presents and charges that at Yokohama, Japan, Edith May Hallowell Carew on the 22nd day of October in the Year of Our Lord 1896 feloniously, wilfully, and of malice afore-thought did kill and murder one Walter Raymond Hallowell Carew against the peace of Our Lady the Queen, her Crown and Dignity.

There was a moment's pause. Then the question was put to the prisoner :

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"How say you, Edith May Hallowell Carew, are you guilty, or not guilty?"

"I am not guilty," answered the accused woman in a voice that was scarcely heard.

The plea having been entered, the names of the jurors were called. Although only five were required, considerable difficulty was found in assembling this number. Nine of those on the list did not answer their names; three others put in a medical certificate of ill health; two declared that they should be exempted on the grounds of deafness; and four were challenged.

Given motive and opportunity in one and the same person, it is not difficult to establish a strong presumption of guilt. Undoubtedly such presumption existed here, so far as Edith Carew was concerned. Her illicit "friendship" with the young bank clerk supplied the motive for accomplishing Walter Carew's death; and the fact that she had nursed him in his last illness supplied the opportunity.

Mr. Wilkinson, of the Shanghai Bar, who opened the case for the Crown, admitted quite candidly that practically all the evidence he should offer would be circumstantial. The law, he said, did not require that there should be any actual witnesses. If it did, he told the jury, a conviction could never be secured in a case of suspected poisoning. But, apart from circumstantial evidence, he had direct evidence that Mrs. Carew had bought a quantity of arsenic, and that, in her relations with Mr. Dickinson, she had a demonstrable motive for causing the death of her husband.

The witness round whom revolved the most interest was Mr. Dickinson. His position was a singularly unhappy one, as

he had to give evidence against the woman with whom he had had a "romance" a second time, and also to endure the ordeal of having his love-letters read to a gaping and curious public.

Among these letters was one which indicated something remarkably akin to a conspiracy between himself and its recipient :

It will be necessary to be quite in accord with each other. On broad questions, we must be able to answer alike. You first wrote to me about the money—writing to the man you could best entrust with some of your own unhappiness.

Money was a necessity ; and it was a very natural thing to come to me about it. This, of course, led to my advising you how to get it ; and, as the money proved a source of much anxiety to yourself on account of his attempts to get it, I often saw you at your house.

If ever questioned *re* meeting me on the Hills, we must admit it of course, as our meetings were for the purpose of talking generally over what was the best course to take as regards yourself. We met on no particular hills, mind, and never mention the fortification. It is too near the cottage, and, if possible, that should be kept out of it. We sometimes rode and sometimes walked, but our hill meetings have been so infrequent that it should be difficult to make any point against you. Our meeting-places for the one or two occasions when we did meet must be the tea-house near the steep hill, or by the race-course. . . . Burn all this, when you have read and learnt the early part.

An odd letter for a bank clerk to write. But it went on in a still more odd strain, for it definitely suggested that Mrs. Carew should consult a solicitor as to the possibility of securing a divorce.

. . . It is quite clear to me now—at all risks, at all hazards—divorce. You must not mind your poor brother's and father's

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feelings over the scandal. Your personal safety is of more importance to us all than any scandals. . . Now and always I will help you in all things, if you want me, and I know you do. Keep up your heart, my dear one, and do not give in under his cruelty and coarseness.

This attack on the dead man's reputation was not permitted to pass unquestioned.

"Did you yourself ever see Mr. Carew treating his wife unkindly?" the witness was asked.

"Never," was the answer. "I know now," he added, "that what she told me about this was incorrect."

This was obvious, for it was shown that, even while she was complaining of his alleged ill-treatment, Mrs. Carew was writing affectionate letters to her husband. Thus one of them began, "My own darling," and they all ended, "Your ever-loving wife."

But counsel had not yet done with Mr. Dickinson.

"If a divorce had been granted," he said, "would you have married Mrs. Carew?"

"We never discussed such a step."

The Crown Prosecutor turned to another item in the correspondence :

I should think you ought to ask for the letters. I should do so without hesitation. If I see the usual signal, I could also look in after tiffin, perhaps, though I am not certain *re* this. I should go and ask for the letters, taking care, however, no strangers are near you.

"What were these letters?" he demanded.

"They were letters which Mrs. Carew told me her husband had written to someone at the post office."

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"And what was the 'usual signal,' to which you refer?"

"That was a handkerchief which Mrs. Carew would hang out of a certain window when I could go in and see her."

A lady's handkerchief as a love-signal! The jury whispered among themselves. Even the judge looked astonished, as he recorded the fact on his notes.

Mr. Dickinson, more careful than Mrs. Carew, had only kept one letter from her:

Forgive me, my dear. I always come to you in my troubles. There is nothing much the matter, but I should like your advice on a matter which must be decided early to-morrow. He is so far quite indifferent as to yesterday, beyond calling you a few inelegant names.

Evidence concerning the torn-up scraps recovered from Mrs. Carew's waste-paper basket was given by Elsa Christoffel. As before, she declared that her intention had been to "protect the character of Miss Jacob."

"Protect it from what?" enquired Mr. Lowder, as he rose to cross-examine.

"Well, if it became generally known that men were visiting the house, it might be thought that they had gone there to see my friend, Miss Jacob. These letters prove the contrary."

"And did her character require such protection?" demanded the other.

"No, it didn't."

As Miss Christoffel was of Swiss birth, the judge, looking puzzled, suggested that perhaps she had not understood the question. Accepting this view, Mr. Lowder went on to another point, and extracted from her a statement that she had written

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an anonymous letter. This was one she had sent to a man who visited at the Carews' house, and was to warn him not to go there again. "Call this the product of a mad woman," it said, "but keep away from that house."

Elsa Christoffel had also written the word "Maruya" on the slip of paper that led Dr. Wheeler to discover where Mrs. Carew had purchased arsenic.

"It was the name of the Japanese chemist," she explained. "I heard of it from Miss Jacob, and I wrote it down at the request of my employer, Mr. Dunlop."

(8)

The case was full of surprises. In the middle of the proceedings, Mr. Lowder, for the defence, adopted a very odd course. As it was obvious that Walter Carew's death had resulted from arsenical poisoning, not administered by himself, he could only clear his client by establishing that somebody else had administered it. For this purpose, he fixed on Mary Jacob, and, in his capacity as a "private individual," he had her arrested and charged with the murder.

This second case proceeded concurrently with that of Mrs. Carew, but was heard in the Consular Court before Mr. Troup, the Assistant Judge. There was much public sympathy for Miss Jacob, and a subscription was set on foot to secure legal help. This was supplied by Mr. George Scidmore, Deputy Consul for America.

Although he protested that he brought the charge from a "sense of duty," the action of Mr. Lowder was much criticised. What he endeavoured to establish was that the "Annie Luke"

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letters were really written by Miss Jacob. In one of them the expression "twin soul" had occurred. It also occurred in a novel by Marie Corelli. Miss Jacob was fond of reading novels by this author. Consequently, she had written these letters.

This was not regarded by the court as a very brilliant piece of deduction. When the judge said so, Mr. Lowder began a fresh attack, and suggested that questionable relations had existed between Miss Jacob and her employer's husband. As he was no more successful in this, he declared that he would offer further evidence at the next hearing. But, during the interval, he altered his mind ; and, letting the matter drop, returned to the defence of Mrs. Carew.

Public interest in the case was such that long reports were telegraphed to England at the end of each day's hearing. The majority of these accounts were quite reliable. Some odd influences, however, were at work, for, in the middle of the proceedings, a London journal printed a message "From Our Own Correspondent," purporting to give the result :

The Carew murder trial at Yokohama has collapsed in dramatic fashion. Miss Jacob has confessed to the poisoning of Mr. Carew and to the authorship of the mysterious letters.

This, of course, was at once denied by the responsible agencies. A reward of 500 dollars was also offered for information as to the sender of the telegram. There were whispers of "Annie Luke," but nothing definite ever transpired.

There was a long battle of words as to the authorship of the letters signed "A. L." As this was held to be the key to the mystery, it involved much argument. Mr. William Mason, an English master at Tokio, who was put forward by the Crown

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as an expert, declared that the handwriting in all of them resembled that of Mrs. Carew, and not, as the defence had alleged, that of either Miss Jacob or Miss Christoffel.

Mr. Lowder would give way on one point only. This was the contention that a letter, with the signature "A. L. Price," which had been sent to Sir Ernest Satow, H.B.M.'s Minister at Tokio, had been written by Mrs. Carew.

"She wrote it," he said, "in a fit of distraction and while smarting under a sense of the injustice done her by the coroner. It was natural she should have sought redress from her own Minister. If she had put her own name to it, no fault would have been found with her."

Sir Ernest Satow himself gave evidence that he had received this letter, which ran as follows :

DEAR SIR,—I wish to call your attention to the very scandalous way in which our Consul, Mr. Hall, has conducted the inquest on the late Mr. Carew. Had he any right to sum up in the face of the evidence produced as he has done ?

Faithfully yours,
A. L. PRICE.

(9)

For hour after hour, and day after day, the racked woman sat in the dreadful shadow of the dock, listening with strained attention to the pleadings of the counsel on either side. One side battling for her freedom ; the other for her conviction. Hope alternated with despair. Perhaps the worst ordeal to which she was subjected was having to listen to the Dickinson letters being read to the jury. Henry Dickinson was her friend. What could have possessed him to write such letters ? What, however, was much more to the point was why had she not

burned them to ashes, and destroyed them utterly? Mr. Lowder affected to regard them as of small consequence, protesting that a young man in love would write anything, and imagine encouragement where it did not exist. But it was clear that the jury were unconvinced. They had been young themselves.

Owing to the number of adjournments, the case dragged on for nearly a month. It was not until February 1st, more than three weeks after the hearing commenced, that Mr. Lowder was able to address the jury. This address was of more length than strength. Much of it was occupied with an attempt to discredit Mary Jacob and Elsa Christoffel. Referring to them as a "couple of pilfering thieves," counsel suggested that they had improperly endeavoured to throw suspicion on his client. As for the "Annie Luke" letters, he still held that Edith Carew could not have written them, because they contained expressions unlike any she would have employed. The Dickinson correspondence, he said, had been put forward to establish that the prisoner had a motive for accomplishing her husband's death. "Yet, no woman," he declared, "ever had a more complaisant husband. Why should this one want to be free of a husband who gave her every facility for indulging in flirtations? If Mrs. Carew wrote of him as bullying her, it was merely an exaggerated method of attracting the sympathetic interest of Henry Dickinson, with whom she was for the moment amusing herself."

In support of his rather odd theories, Mr. Lowder quoted the Latin epigram : *Quid levius penna? Pulvis. Quid pulvere? Ventus. Quid vento? Mulier. Quid muliere? Nihil.*

For the benefit of those of his hearers who had not kept up

their classics, he supplied a rough and ready rendering, and declared that the Dickinson episode was simply a "passing flirtation." "If," he added, "Mrs. Carew permitted this witness a greater degree of encouragement than was strictly prudent, she did no more than hundreds of women have done before her, and will continue to do despite anything that moralists may preach to the contrary."

Warned, apparently, by the expressions on the faces of the married members of the jury that this was a dangerous line to follow, he dropped it and took up another one. This was that Mrs. Carew had so little motive for causing her husband's death that, when it occurred, she was arranging to buy him a partnership in a silk business. He then went on to discuss whether Walter Carew had died from poisoning at all ; and, if so, whether it had been administered by himself or by somebody else. The post-mortem, he remarked, had revealed the presence of three distinct poisons in the dead man's body, but only one of them had been purchased by Mrs. Carew. Moreover, she had purchased it quite openly, and at the request of her husband. "An affectionate wife and mother," he said solemnly, "does not turn all at once and by easy stages into the dreadful wickedness of a *Borgia*."

The peroration ended on a high note :

"Confronted, gentlemen, with this monstrous charge of murder, my client has stood erect, proudly assured of her innocence. Her courage has never failed her. Gentlemen, I am cheered by the reflection that, however wanting the defence set up may be, a prisoner in the position of my client is never unprotected in a court of law that is presided over by a British judge, assisted by a British jury!"

The Crown Prosecutor followed with a speech that, although it took a long time to do so, made short work of much that the defence had said. When he had finished, with a solemn injunction to the jury to deliver a verdict "in accordance with the facts, and irrespective of their feelings," the judge delivered his charge.

The summing-up of Mr. Justice Mowat was eminently fair. Still, he, like the coroner, let it be seen that he had grave doubts as to the corporate existence (at any rate in Japan) of the mysterious Annie Luke. As for the letters purporting to have been written by her, it was, he said, difficult to make satisfactory deductions from them. With regard, however, to the Dickinson letters, they at least showed that Mrs. Carew had appealed to the writer for sympathy by representing that her marital relations were unhappy. Yet her own counsel had protested that they were quite happy. The prosecution, not accepting this, had suggested that the letters written by Mr. Dickinson, which were obviously a reflex of those written to him, furnished a motive for the crime. Not, of course, that a motive was necessary. Still, it was a help in solving such a problem as the one that now had to be solved—that is, by whose hand had Walter Carew been sent to his death?

"I ask you, gentlemen," were the judge's last words, "to consider your verdict. It must not be based on suspicion, however strong, or on conjecture, however probable. It must be based on conviction that is founded on the evidence, and on nothing else. You must do your duty honestly and fearlessly."

(10)

Thus directed, the jury withdrew, to discuss the strange and tragic story to which they had now been listening for twenty-one days. It was thought that they would be absent for a long period. Yet, within half an hour, a message was received from the foreman that they had come to a decision.

"Are you agreed upon your verdict?" enquired the Clerk of the Court, when they filed back into their places.

"We are," answered the foreman.

"How say you, is the prisoner at the bar guilty, or not guilty?"

"Guilty."

"And is that the verdict of you all?"

"It is."

"Edith May Hallowell Carew," said the clerk, turning to the trembling woman in the dock. "Have you anything to say why sentence should not be passed?"

"No," she whispered.

A tense hush settled down upon the court. "The face of the accused," says an eye-witness, "became overspread with a ghastly dull tint; the lines of her lips slackened; the look of a stricken animal crept into her eyes; and her hands clutched convulsively at the ledge of the dock."

Suddenly, there was a stir, and Mr. Justice Mowat was seen to be placing a small square of black silk upon his wig.

"Edith May Hallowell Carew," he said in a solemn voice, "the sentence of the court is that you forthwith be taken from where you now stand to the British Consular Jail at Yokohama. There you will remain interned until, on a day to be appointed

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by the proper authority, you shall be led out to the place of your execution within the precincts of the Consular Jail, and there you shall be hanged by the neck until you are dead ; and your body shall then be taken down and buried within the precincts of the Jail ; and may God have mercy on your soul !

(11)

The conviction of Edith Carew automatically resulted in the collapse of the charge against Mary Jacob. As a matter of fact, Mr. Lowder himself withdrew it voluntarily, and before the verdict had been delivered. Thereupon, she was given the following certificate :

A charge by a private prosecutor was laid in H.B.M.'s Court here on January 10th, 1897, against Mary Esther Jacob of having murdered one Walter Hallowell Carew at this place.

A preliminary examination in the case was held before me, as Assistant Judge of the Court, on various subsequent dates ; and on this 5th day of February application was made by the Prosecutor for permission to withdraw the charge. This permission was granted by the Court, and no imputation whatever in connection with this matter rests on Mary Esther Jacob.

JAMES TROUP.

H.B.M.'s Consul, British Consulate, Yokohama.

Miss Jacob also received the following letter from Mr. Lowder himself :

February 13th, 1897.

MADAME,—I am this moment, and for the first time, in receipt of proof which is conclusive to my mind that you were not the writer of the "A. L." letters ; and I now hasten to ask you to accept that apology which I have heretofore been unable

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conscientiously to offer you for the pain and mental suffering to which you have been put in consequence of the charge I considered it my duty to prefer against you, and which I am now convinced was unfounded.

Very faithfully,
J. F. LOWDER.

This was all very well, so far as it went. As, however, it did not go far enough, Miss Jacob's legal adviser asked for a more detailed disclaimer. What he particularly wanted was a withdrawal of the offensive suggestion that an improper measure of intimacy had existed between Miss Jacob and Mr. Carew. The withdrawal was promptly supplied :

SIR,—the publication of the letter addressed to Miss Jacob (on the 13th inst.) has resulted in the communication to me of facts which indicate the existence of a depth of duplicity and deceit which is to my mind unimaginable ; of which I, among others, have been the unconscious dupe, and Miss Jacob the victim. . . . Words fail me to express the regret with which the hearing of the story has filled me ; for I feel that an act of injustice has been committed, for which, had it been intentional on my part, no reparation in my power could be adequate.

. . . Believe me, my single desire and sole concern is to satisfy your client by doing what lies in my power to restore her character to the extent that I have been instrumental in impeaching it ; and, to that end, I now explicitly withdraw every word I have said imputing the existence of questionable relations between her and the late Mr. Carew.

An advocate should, of course, be zealous in the defence of his client. Still, there is such a thing as pressing this beyond justifiable limits. It was certainly felt that Mr. Lowder had done so in impeaching the character of Miss Jacob, by first charging her with murdering Mr. Carew, and then with having committed misconduct with him.

(12)

So far as the public were concerned, this was the end of the "Carew Case." But it was not an altogether satisfactory end. The trial had left many problems still unsolved. They never were solved. It is clear, however, that the author of the "Annie Luke" letters was either the actual poisoner of Walter Carew or somebody in close touch with that individual. Who, then, wrote these letters? If not Mrs. Carew, it must have been somebody who had come to Yokohama for the express purpose of murdering Walter Carew. The defence had suggested that his slayer was Annie Luke. Yet nobody but Mrs. Carew had seen her in Japan. Nor was anything ever seen of her afterwards in England.

Wilkie Collins created a "Woman in White." Did Edith Carew create a "Woman in Black"?

Edith Carew was spared the last shame of the scaffold. Exercising the prerogative of mercy that, as British Minister in Japan, was vested in him, Sir Ernest Satow commuted the death sentence to one of penal servitude for life.

MARY ANNE CLARKE

G_F



MARY ANNE CLARKE
“Favourite” of a Royal Duke

MARY ANNE CLARKE

Mrs. Clarke has moved in the style and way of living of our first line of nobility, of the upper rank of which the Princes are an ornament. These blessings of the reign of his present Majesty adorn the age they live in, and practically prove the freedom that Englishmen are eternally boasting of as a constitutional blessing. To all this may be added that prevalent spirit of munificence which manifests itself on all occasions, and more particularly in private ; that amiable modesty which conceals their actions from public admiration.

(1)

THERE has always been talk of “petticoat influence” at the War Office. Whatever may be the case there to-day, a hundred and twenty years ago, when the activities in this direction of a notorious demirep were on everybody’s lips, the “talk” was well founded. In fact, so much so that the conduct of the Commander-in-Chief himself formed the subject of a public enquiry. A discreditable chapter in our military administration. Yet not without its lighter side.

The Commander-in-Chief thus affected was no less a person than H.R.H. the Duke of York ; and the lady by whom he was so compromised that, yielding to popular clamour, he felt constrained to relinquish his appointment, was a certain Mrs. Mary Anne Clarke.

There is something of a mystery about Mrs. Clarke’s parentage. Her own view was that she was the daughter of a Colonel

Frederick, and granddaughter of no less an individual than Theodore, King of Corsica. Another account, however, declares that her father was a bricklayer, called Thompson, who, like so many of his countrymen, had come to London via Aberdeen. Be this as it may, it is certainly significant that Mary Anne was brought up by Mr. and Mrs. Thompson as their own legitimate offspring.

On the death of Mr. Thompson, his widow re-married, her second husband being George Farquhar, a compositor. As there was not too much money, and the new Mrs. Farquhar was kept busy with the cares of a rapidly increasing family, the girl had to turn to and help in bringing grist to the mill ; and, when she was only fourteen, her stepfather secured her a job as copy-reader at the same establishment as himself.

"But these readings," says a shocked chronicler, "did not regulate her judgment nor mend her manners. She was a romp, and very much attracted the notice of the overseer of the printing-house where she was employed." The occupant of this position was a Mr. Day. His intentions towards her being strictly honourable, he, following the example of his illustrious namesake, the author of *Sandford and Merton*, sent his protégé to a boarding-school at Ham. On, however, her return, after a couple of years' interval, his hopes were rudely demolished. Instead of Mary Anne permitting him to put a ring on her finger and transform her into Mrs. Day, a "fracas ensued, and she made a clandestine marriage with a Mr. Clarke, the second son of a builder."

When Mary Anne Thompson, as she was then, joined her lot with that of Mr. Clarke, she was scarcely sixteen, and Clarke himself was not much older. A little young for the adventure

of matrimony. The hurried marriage soon lost its glamour. But this, perhaps, was inevitable, for the bride was not domesticated, and the bridegroom developed a fondness for drinking brandy and backing horses. As a result of this unfortunate combination, he neglected his business and became a bankrupt.

At this period in her career Mrs. Clarke, according to an anonymous chronicler, was "gay, volatile, and sprightly, but still walked rigidly in the bonds of decorum. The gossip Scandal had not yet directed an oblique squint her way." It was, however, soon to do so. The lady, it must be confessed, supplied sufficient cause. Oblivious of her solemn promise to him at the altar, she left Mr. Clarke, and went off to find consolation elsewhere. A slip, certainly. Still, all the blame was not on her side. She had been treated abominably. She had put up with her husband's neglect, his tippling, and his gambling, as also with what were coyly dubbed his "promiscuous amours." She had presented him with four children, and he had never contributed a penny to their support. Indeed, between Joseph Clarke, as a husband and father, and Mrs. Clarke, as a wife and mother, there was little (if anything) to choose.

Samuel Whitbread, who combined the principles of Non-conformity with the practice of brewing, dismisses Mrs. Clarke in sour fashion as a "vulgar and extravagant woman." This is unmerited, for, while she was undoubtedly extravagant, she was anything but vulgar. On the contrary, all the evidence shows that she was possessed of taste, a witty tongue, and good manners. Had this not been the case, she could never have held her own in the modish world where

she shone for years. Captain Gronow, who, in his character as a “man-about-town,” made it his business to know everybody, would appear to agree. “This lady,” he says, “was remarkable for her beauty and her fascinations ; and few came within the circle over which she presided who did not acknowledge her superior power.” A second authority goes more into detail : “Though she is not a perfect beauty, she has many agreeable attractions ; one in particular from a well-turned arm. She is lively and gay in conversation. Her easy demeanour, upon the first acquaintance, is what the French call eminently pre-possessing. Her face is oval, but not long ; small nose, beaming with the most irresistible archness and captivating intelligence ; her mouth is small, and presents good, even teeth ; and we have no hesitation in saying that, without being regularly handsome, she is second to none in those attractions that please the opposite sex.”

With a carelessness that calls for criticism, Mrs. Clarke has been set down by a paragraphist as of “no occupation.” An unwarrantable slur, for she was always very much occupied. In fact, during the heyday of her career, there could have been few busier women. Her business had various names. That of the ultra-polite was “Cyprian” or “Fair Impure.” Most people, however, clung to the old-fashioned term, “whore.”

In the distribution of her favours, Mary Anne Clarke cut a wide swath. Also, she began early. Thus, her first intrigue was with a pawnbroker’s assistant. But this was a pre-marital slip, and scarcely counted. It was when she had left Mr. Clarke’s roof that she really launched out on her self-chosen

career. Flying at high game, she “formed an illicit connection” with a baronet, who, much to the scandal of his strait-laced relatives, established her in his country seat near Salisbury. But his instincts were not generous; for, while he breathed words of love into her ears, he was dumb on the subject of a settlement. Mary Anne, brought up in the hard school of adversity, attached considerable importance to this matter. The result was, when the close-fisted baronet proved deaf to broad hints and open requests alike, she took herself off elsewhere.

Mrs. Clarke seems to have had a weakness for baronets, as her two next “protectors” were Sir Charles Milner and Sir James Brudenell. Sir Charles, who was declared by her to be “a gudgeon and coxcomb of the first water,” was soon given his *congé*. Nor did Sir James have a long lease. The lady herself ended it by ordering £200 worth of feminine fal-lals, and sending him the bill. This was more—much more—than Sir James Brudenell would put up with. “Upon this business,” says a biographer, “he suffered her to leave town without bidding her adieu.” Resentment proved more powerful than love; and Mrs. Clarke, on receiving a short note from that gentleman, wrote him in answer: “I must hereafter despise the ungenerous man who, after going so far, abandons me to my folly.”

The next *liaison* into which she entered had its origin at Vauxhall, with a “man-about-town” (alleged). In this case, Mary Anne, for all her experience, showed a sad lack of intuition. She took the Vauxhall gallant for a “gentleman of fortune,” whereas he was really living on his wits, with a sideline in card-sharping. Still, the pair did not quarrel. Instead, they set up housekeeping together at Shepherd’s Bush. The

amorous adventure was a brief one. As soon as the curtain had rung down upon it, Mrs. Clarke had a considerable stroke of luck. This was to come across a wealthy and infatuated youth named William Dowler, the son of a rich and liberal-minded City merchant. For a time, all went well. Mr. Dowler, only too glad to gratify her whims, dipped into the paternal money-bags, and Mrs. Clarke lived in the luxury she coveted. But she wanted so much luxury that the other began to look glum. There was a tiff, the upshot of which was that the pair separated.

Rumour has it that, on leaving the more or less disconsolate Dowler, Mrs. Clarke turned her attention to the footlights, and joined the Haymarket company. If so, she was not there long. Still, it was long enough to secure a couple of fresh victims from among the "fashionables" who had the *entrée* to the green-room. One of these was young Lord Barrymore, and the other was a Mr. Ogilvie, an Army agent. The latter, having the longer purse, had the bigger share of her society. He gave her what she had long wanted, an "establishment" in Tavistock Place. His views, too, were so liberal that he did not object when my Lord Barrymore began to be a regular visitor there as well as himself.

History is made in odd corners. Some of it was made in this Bloomsbury one, for it was there that Mary Anne Clarke met Frederick Augustus, Duke of York. The garrulous Gronow, however, has it that her first meeting with "jolly, cursing, courageous Frederick" (as Thackeray calls him) occurred at Blackheath. This is further embellished by a statement that she sat beside him in the Royal box at the local theatre, where the awed manager took her for the Duchess. There is no evidence

of any such thing having happened. Gronow, however, was not the man to trouble about evidence when it stood between himself and a choice bit of gossip for the clubs.

Frederick Augustus, Duke of York, son of George III and brother of the Prince of Wales, was then in his thirty-ninth year, and, incidentally, a married man. He had his qualities, as well as his defects. Big and bluff and burly, and "fond of a glass and fond of a lass" (several at the same time), he was a popular figure with the average individual. He was devoted to the Turf; he kept up a racing stable; he had won the Derby; and he had had an "affair of honour" on Wimbledon Common. This pistols-for-two-and-coffee-for-one business was the result of a misunderstanding with a hot-tempered Guards officer, Colonel Lennox. The Duke received his adversary's fire (the ball grazing his wig), and declined to return it. Thus he established his courage.

Of his gifts as a military tactician, however, the less said the better. Still, on returning from the expedition in Holland, where his odd generalship (and whimsical ideas on route-marching) only resulted in irrevocably damaging British prestige, the Duke was appointed Commander-in-Chief, "and his sword hung up in the Tower, as if it were the sword of Austerlitz." Yet the selection was not really a bad one, since, if unfit for active service, H.R.H. was capable of good routine work. His weak point was his susceptibility to a pretty face and a clever tongue. Had she not possessed these qualities to the full, he would never have dallied with Mary Anne Clarke; and, had he not dallied with her, he would have been spared much opprobrium. All said and done, he had only himself to thank for his subsequent eclipse.

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Wherever it was that she made the Duke's acquaintance, Mary Anne Clarke turned the meeting to account. Under his "protection," she left Bloomsbury for Park Lane, and Park Lane for the (then) still more fashionable Gloucester Place, Portman Square. Early in 1804 her princely admirer set her up there in a "guilty splendour" that outshone all the others she had known. On the understanding that he was to be "good" for £12,000 a year, she lived in the most extravagant style imaginable. Thus she filled her stables with carriages and horses ; she kept three cooks at once (harassed housewives of to-day would be interested to learn how she managed this), and a dozen liveried funkeys ; she only condescended to eat off gold and silver plate ; she drank from wineglasses that cost a fabulous sum, and stocked her cellar with the rarest vintages ; and a score of "fashionables" from Almack's and Willis's put their legs under her mahogany every evening.

"Gay goings-on in Gloucester Place!" says a paragraphist. One can well believe it.

A thousand pounds a month went a longish way, certainly. Still, not so far as this. The fact was, the Royal almoner was apt to be remiss in writing his promised cheques, and there were months when he omitted to send one at all. The châtelaine of Gloucester Place had no diffidence or mock modesty in reminding him that housekeeping on the lavish scale she considered necessary for her "position" was impossible if the bills were not met with reasonable punctuality. H.R.H. merely swore a round Hanoverian oath, and changed the subject. But

the creditors adhered to it. Also, they exerted pressure. Some of them—the more persistent among them—even talked of putting in the bailiffs, and hinted at the chill discomforts of the Fleet Prison.

Something had to be done. Mary Anne Clarke did it. If his Royal Highness would not help her, she must try somebody else. She tried her old flame, Mr. Dowler. He had not been treated too well, but he was of a forgiving disposition and was prepared to let bygones be bygones. At any rate, he came to the rescue with a generous cheque. He also paid off the myrmidons of the Sheriff of Middlesex, who, at the instance of a clamorous shopman, had sequestrated her furniture and goods.

Of course, Mr. Dowler, being only human, wanted something in return. What he wanted was a military post that would bring the occupant honour and glory, together with financial profit and next to no risk. His information was that just such a post happened to be going in the commissariat branch. It was not to be had without “influence”; but such, he felt sure, could be supplied by Mrs. Clarke, who was popularly supposed to be able to twist the Commander-in-Chief round her little finger.

His confidence was well founded. For all the £70,000 a year he received from the public purse, Frederick of York was always much more ready to give away patronage than cash. By methods best known to herself, Mrs. Clarke got his promise, and Mr. Dowler's name appeared in the *London Gazette* as a full-fledged commissary. Of course, it was a “job.” Still, the age was an age of “jobs,” and nobody (except, perhaps, the private soldiers who had to pay for his inexperience)

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worried because Mr. Dowler could strut along Pall Mall with cocked hat and sword complete.

Naturally enough, Mrs. Clarke was not forgotten ; and her services were recognised by a substantial "present" from the grateful Mr. Dowler. The ease with which the business had been effected gave her an idea. There were numbers of people, she knew, who wanted commissions and promotion. The regulation method of securing an initial appointment or subsequent advancement was "by purchase," at a tariff fixed by the military authorities. But this method was both costly and slow. Mrs. Clarke felt she could improve upon it. Under her scheme, the candidate said just what he wanted, and what he was prepared to pay. If the amount were satisfactory, she then "put him on her list." H.R.H. attached his signature to the necessary document ; and Mr. Buggins, or Mr. Huggins, or Mr. Juggins—or whoever it happened to be—found himself gazetted. The Duke, as Commander-in-Chief, was spared a great deal of trouble. The aspirants, too, liked the "system," for it involved "no nonsense about merit," or wearisome enquiries as to qualifications. Of course, they had to pay the fair go-between for her help. Still, that her tariff was much more moderate than the official one is clear from the following figures :

RANK	REGULATION PRICE	MRS. CLARKE'S PRICE
Majority	£2,600	£900
Captaincy	1,500	700
Lieutenancy	550	400
Ensigncy	400	200

An average reduction of fifty per cent., and the goods of the same quality.

(4)

Mary Anne Clarke soon realised that a treasure-house was at her doors ; and her hands held the key that unlocked it. In a few months she had so many candidates on her books that she had to employ outside help in the control of her favours. Her principal touts—for they could not properly be called anything else—were a certain Mr. Jeremiah Donovan and a Captain Sandon. These two worthies also had their “pickings” from this campaign of venality, and waxed fat on it. They would draw up long lists of would-be ensigns and cornets, as well as of full-fledged officers who wanted superior rank. When the Duke called at No. 18 Gloucester Place, these lists would be submitted to him, with pen and ink ready to hand. It was very seldom that the Royal signature was withheld. Mars could refuse his Venus nothing when she asked for it nicely.

“Otherwise,” is Greville’s naïve comment on these transactions, “the Duke was somewhat of a stickler for honesty in the Service.”

That all the recipients of Mrs. Clarke’s bounty were not sources of financial profit to her is clear from the fact that one of them was a good-looking young footman in her employ, Samuel Carter by name. Having a soul above flunkeyism, possibly due to his being the son of an officer (although born on the wrong side of the blanket), he cherished an ambition to wear the King’s, instead of his mistress’s, livery. Thanks to Mrs. Clarke, he was appointed an ensign. What he gave her in exchange is a little matter they kept to themselves.

Bursting, as he was, with military enthusiasm, it was not long before Ensign Carter discovered (as did Sancho Panza on

becoming Governor of Barataria) that increased status had its drawbacks. Gold on his sleeves was all very well, but he had next to none in his pockets. This was where he wanted it. Accordingly, on being shipped off to the West Indies to join his regiment, he wrote a pathetic appeal to his benefactress, asking for pecuniary assistance :

Impelled by my dreadful situation, and my perfect knowledge of your goodness, I trust you will pardon the liberty of addressing you. . . . I am now on board, in a situation not to be described. I have no stock for the voyage, neither have I any money to purchase these little things which are absolutely necessary.

I have to keep watch four hours every night, and have nothing to eat but salt meat three times a week, and water to drink, the rum being so bad 'tis impossible to drink it.

Your goodness to me has ever been such as leaves not the smallest doubt that you will not suffer me to starve in the situation in which you have been pleased to place me, and which is such as will ever tend to make me the most grateful and happy of beings. Should, madam, you be induced to take into consideration my wretched case, and by a little monetary aid save me from everything that is horrible, it will be an act worthy of yourself, and imprint that upon my heart which will never be erased.

Presumably such assistance was forthcoming, as we next hear of ex-flunkey Carter in Jamaica, where he blossomed into a colonel.

The traffic in commissions went on merrily. Everybody knew of it, but nobody seemed to care. During the course of the six years it lasted thousands of pounds went into Mrs. Clarke's pocket. Some cases were more nefarious than others. Prominent among such was that of a Colonel French, who

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wanted to have the raising of a levy of 5,000 men, to fill up the gaps in Wellington's battalions. Mrs. Clarke's terms were stiff, £500 down, and a guinea for each recruit accepted. Another case where "petticoat influence" was clearly visible was that of a Captain Maling. This would-be warrior drove a quill in a bank. But he knew who pulled the strings at the Horse Guards ; and, although he never left London or did an hour's duty as an officer, he was none the less given a commission and promoted in record time to a captaincy.

Among the swarm of officers to secure "preferential treatment" in this surreptitious fashion was a Major Charles James. After purchasing a lieutenancy, he was promoted major, and given "perpetual leave of absence." He did not even trouble to join his corps, except for one day. None the less, he drew the emoluments of his rank, as well as forage for three horses. Still, Major James had some qualities. He was said to be a good billiards player, and also something of a poet. A specimen of his prowess with the Muse is given by an admirer :

My name is York, I draw a cork
Much better than I fight ;
The soldiers knew, as well as you,
That what I say is right !

Notwithstanding all her care and insistence on ready money, Mrs. Clarke did once suffer a disappointment. A certain Major Shaw had promised her £1,000 for a position which he coveted at the Cape. The post was secured, but not the cash. This rankled ; and, feeling that she was being trifled with, the justly indignant lady reported him to the Duke as a defaulter. It was an effective step, as the forgetful officer was promptly recalled.

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The suggestion, however, that he had been guilty of "bilking" was warmly repudiated by his father. "I am prepared to bring evidence," he declared, "that my son is incapable of making any promise that he has not literally and honourably kept." But the major's letters, full of excuses, and begging for "time," convicted him of, to put it mildly, sharp practice.

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Mary Anne Clarke had many irons in the fire. When the military stream developed symptoms of becoming choked, she turned her attention to other sources of profit. The tessellated mosaic of her financial transactions is difficult to follow, for it covered a very wide field. She took the Church and the Civil Service under her wing, and drove corrupt bargains with ambitious clerics and place-hunters generally. Her jackal-in-chief continued to be the egregious Donovan, who made it his business to discover just what billets were going, and what the aspirants would offer for them. If all were satisfactory, he would then throw out a "feeler," such as the following :

Charles Street,
St. James's Square,
October 8th, 1808.

DEAR MADAM,—The Deanery of Hereford is vacant, and in the sole gift of the Duke of Portland. Can you procure it for the Rev. G. H. Glasse. I would myself, unknown to him, give £1,000 for it. . . . Mr. G. is my most particular friend. . . . I can with confidence assure you he is a very good scholar, a man of good fortune, and an *extraordinary kind friend*, of excellent connections, well known to the Dukes of Cumberland and Cambridge.

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By some mischance, this ingenuous attempt to further the welfare of Mr. Glasse came to the ears of Dr. Porteous, Bishop of London. His Grace was so annoyed that he stopped the reverend gentleman's hopes of becoming Dean of Hereford, or of anywhere else. In addition, he had him removed from a snug secretarial billet.

Undeterred, however, by this little contretemps, a few days later Mr. Donovan "approached" Mrs. Clarke with another request. His ideas, it will be noted, still ran on deans and dukes :

October 20th, 1808.

DEAR MADAM,—Some friends of the Rev. T. Basely, M.A., are extremely desirous of procuring for him promotion in the Church ; and it appears to them a very favourable opportunity, the Deanery of Salisbury being vacant, to make application to the Duke of Portland. In order to secure an interest without his knowledge, a party of ladies, at the head of whom is Lady Cardigan, have subscribed a sum of money, 3,000 guineas, which is ready to be deposited, to carry into execution this intended plan. The ladies are very anxious, and at the same time desirous, that he should not know through what channel the money is raised.

The anxiety of the ladies counted for nothing, and Mr. Basely fared even worse than Mr. Glasse. It was, however, his own fault, for he actually had the effrontery to write to the Duke of Portland and offer him a bribe of £3,000. "I hope," he added, "your Grace will pardon this, and instantly commit these lines to the flames." But the Duke's response was very different. He wrote to the Bishop enquiring if such conduct were approved by him. His lordship's answer left no doubt on the subject :

It is impossible for me to express the astonishment and indignation which were excited in my mind by the perusal of the letter which your Grace has done me the honour of enclosing. It is too true that this wretched creature Basely has one, if not two, charges in my diocese. I have long known him to be a very weak man ; but, till this insufferable insult upon your Grace, I did not know he was so completely wicked, and so totally devoid of all principle.

Still, these mishaps were rare ; and quite a number of the clergy who had no objection to practising simony discovered that the surest road to preferment lay in the joint keeping of Mrs. Clarke and Mr. Donovan.

Touting for clerical patronage did not exhaust the latter's activities. He could, and did, pull other strings. Thus, in November 1808, he wrote to Mrs. Clarke :

DEAR MADAM,—The place of Inspector of Customs is now vacant by the death of Mr. Booty, and I hear that the Queen and the Duke of Dorset are about to apply for it. I hope you will procure it for Mr. Henry Tobin, the gentleman you were so good to say you would serve when an opportunity offered. . . . Can you procure the paymastership to a second battalion for £500 ?

Although his principal thought she could, there was apparently a hitch somewhere, for during the following month she received another missive :

DEAR MADAM,—I am daily plagued about the Savannah la Mars appointment ; also respecting the Landing Waiter's, the 2nd battalion paymastership, and the commissaryship. Pray let me hear from you, on the subject of the Savannah business particularly.

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It is not quite clear when or how the split occurred between the châtelaine of Gloucester Place and her "protector." But it did occur, and the consequences were serious to both parties. The Duke's tactics were dishonourable. As was his custom when there was unpleasant work to be done, he employed somebody else to do it for him. His emissary was a Mr. William Adam, M.P. for Kincardineshire, whose own son, by the way, a schoolboy of fourteen, held an ensign's commission ; and the Duke's instructions to him were to tell Mrs. Clarke that "he had finished with her, but would allow her £400 a year, so long as she conducted herself properly."

Ambassador Adam delivered this ultimatum. Its recipient flung it in his face. On further pressure, however, she exercised her feminine prerogative and accepted the conditions, "provided she had a written promise." But H.R.H., snugly entrenched at the Horse Guards, would put nothing on paper. All he would offer was his "word." As he was soon to fall into arrears with the promised allowance, it was perhaps as well that he did not commit himself. Mrs. Clarke's opinion of the Royal "word" was a poor one, and she protested that she had been "tricked." Certainly, something suspiciously like this had happened, for she had been compelled to abandon the splendours of Gloucester Place for a sordid bedroom in the shop of a Hampstead baker. What, however, was still worse was the discovery that, since her deposition, she had been succeeded by a fresh "Sultanah." As it happened, there was now a quartet of them, in a Mrs. Carey, a Mrs. Cooke, a Mrs. Creswell, and a Mrs. Sinclair. Hence, it is not astonishing

that, when he wished to secure ammunition for his projected attack upon the Duke, Colonel Wardle should have been furnished with a liberal supply by Mrs. Clarke.

This Gwyllym Lloyd Wardle, who was to play such a big rôle in the drama which began as a comedy and nearly ended as a tragedy, was, as his Christian names suggested, of Welsh extraction. Having martial ambitions, he joined a volunteer corps which was raised for service in Ireland against the Wexford rebels. On being demobilised, he was given the honorary rank of Lieut.-Colonel. Never was anybody more military. He took his rank with him into civil life ; and even when he was managing a gin business he was very much “the colonel.” In 1807 he found a fresh field of endeavour, and contrived to get elected M.P. for Okehampton. At Westminster he soon began to assert himself as a critic of the ill-managed Danish Expedition. This led him to discover that all was not well with the Army at home, a condition of affairs which he resolved to remedy. “I know,” he declared grandiloquently, “that, in the performance of this task, I shall incur the most extreme personal inconvenience ; and perhaps absolute suffering. Yet the cause of the country is paramount, and I will do my duty.”

There is a well-founded suggestion that the activities of Crusader Wardle were not entirely inspired by public-spirited motives. It is even said that he wanted to be appointed military secretary at the Horse Guards ; and that, under the régime of the Duke of Kent (whom he hoped to see installed there) he imagined he would have his wish. But he went the wrong way to work. His methods were distinctly underhand. As an initial step, he hired a jackal, one Pierce McCallum, to secure the letters that her “princely paramour” had written

to Mrs. Clarke. The lady, however, was coy, and showed no inclination to give up these souvenirs of happier times. When the go-between offered sympathy, she held out for cash. This was the last thing the close-fisted colonel cared to give. Still, since her help was necessary, and there was no other means of getting it, he advanced a fresh proposal. Enlisting the services of a Major Dodd, he promised £5,000 down and £400 a year, the money to be "guaranteed" by the Duke of Kent, who was at daggers' drawn with his brother of York, and fancied himself as his successor. Of course, if Mary Anne Clarke had been more of a business woman, she would have realised that such a "guarantee" was worth nothing, since the illustrious guarantor was himself insolvent. But, as this knowledge was carefully kept from her by both the colonel and the major, she accepted the terms.

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All being in readiness, Colonel Wardle put a match to the train he had laid. On January 27th, 1809, he brought forward his motion for an enquiry into the conduct of H.R.H. the Duke of York, whom he charged point blank with "corruption." He had got up his case well; and, in the course of a long speech, he supplied the shocked and astonished House with several specific instances of "trafficking" and improper bestowal of military patronage. "From this," he declared, "I infer, first, that Mrs. Clarke possesses the power of military promotion; secondly, that she received a pecuniary consideration for such promotion; and, thirdly, that the Commander-in-Chief was a partaker in the benefits arising from such transactions."

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Sir Francis Burdett seconding, a committee of the whole House was appointed “to investigate the conduct of H.R.H. the Duke of York in his capacity as Commander-in-Chief, with regard to appointments, promotions, exchanges, the raising of new levies, and the general state of the Army.” There was considerable competition to serve on it ; and Mr. Wharton, the Chairman, was overwhelmed with offers.

“London is full of the Duke’s business,” wrote Byron ; and “sad work is afoot,” confided the rigid Wilberforce to his diary. “This melancholy exhibition,” he added, “will do irreparable mischief to public morals, by accustoming the public to hear without emotion shameless violations of decency.” Still, he himself took good care to miss none of it. Similarly, his brother M.P.’s and “the idlers at White’s, and the frequenters of the Opera—whom at other times it had been found difficult to drag from the claret bottle or the ballet to vote even upon the most important questions—were now unfailing in their Parliamentary attendance.”

Reason, too, for such a condition of affairs. “The Theatre Royal, Westminster,” in all its long history had never staged such an attraction. A Royal Duke and a notorious demirep at the head of the cast, and a plot crammed with thrills from beginning to end. Failure was impossible. The drama could have run a year. As it was it held an enraptured public for seven weeks.

Of Mary Anne Clarke’s assumption of the rôle allotted her, we get this picture :

On the 1st of February, in all the pride and bloom of her beauty, the lovely Thais stood at the Bar of the House. Her appearance created a great sensation. Her examination-in-chief

was conducted by Colonel Wardle. She confirmed his opening statements by oral testimony and written documents. In her cross-examination she exhibited extraordinary self-possession, quickness in repartee, and baffled her interrogators by the poignancy of her wit, and exciting the laughter of the House against them, and sometimes converted the question intended to degrade her into a means of annoying the Duke of York.

Another account is more detailed :

. . . When summoned to the Bar, she trips with light and airy step and smirking countenance, as if she was going into a ballroom. Her dress, during this examination, has not been varied ; a light blue silk gown and coat, edged with white fur, and a white muff. On her head she has a white cap or veil, which at no time is let down over her face to hide it. In size she is rather small. She has a fair clear skin and lively blue eyes, but her features are not particularly handsome. She has an appearance of great vivacity and fascination of manner, though she is not a well bred or an accomplished woman. She appears to be about thirty-five years of age, and probably has recommended herself more by her agreeable and lively spirit than by her beauty, though it must be allowed that she is pretty, having a soft delicate complexion and an animated expression of features. When she first came into the House, she was very pale ; on her second appearance, the colour flushed into her face, which was like vermillion, but she seemed not at all daunted or embarrassed at any time.

Whatever the principal witness did exhibit, it was certainly not "embarrassment." That she knew how to hold her own is clear from some of her answers to the questions that were put. Thus, when she was asked who had carried her letters to the Duke, she blandly replied, "The Morocco Ambassador." As the messenger was a shoemaker, the response convulsed the House.

"Are you a married woman?" enquired Sir Vicary Gibbs, the Attorney-General.

"You have no reason to doubt it."

"Is your husband living or dead?"

"I don't know."

"And whose protection are you under now?" was another question.

"I had hoped, sir, I was under yours," was the demure reply. John Wilson Croker, who was very much on the side of the Duke, also came off distinctly second best when he cross-examined her as to her "friendship" with Mr. Dowler. He wanted to know how often, and under what circumstances, she saw him.

"I believe," returned the lady, "that the hon. gentleman can tell that pretty well for himself. His garret window is very convenient for his prying disposition, since it overlooks my house."

In her answers to further questions, Mrs. Clarke threw some interesting sidelights on the system of housekeeping in vogue at 18 Gloucester Place.

"Very often," she declared, "his Royal Highness did not make good his promised payments; and during three months before he left me I never had a guinea from him."

Miss Mary Ann Taylor, a sister-in-law of Mrs. Clarke, stood up for her in loyal fashion, and completely spiked the guns of both Colonel Wardle and Sir Vicary Gibbs. They could make nothing of her.

"What is your father's business?" she was asked.

"He is a gentleman."

"Well, what is his name?"

"The same as mine."

This witness also held the House by her description of a *tête-à-tête* she had overheard between the Duke and Mrs. Clarke, relative to Colonel French. "How does he behave to you, darling?" the Duke had enquired. Then, on getting the answer, "Middling, not very well," he had said, "Master French must mind what he is about, or I shall cut him up, and his levy, too!"

"And was the conversation free and unrestrained?" put in some fatuous Member.

Another witness, a Mrs. Favery, was positively impertinent. "I am not obliged to tell you," she said, when somebody enquired her real name. "I did not come here on that account."

"Where does your father live?"

"In his grave."

After this, it is not astonishing to read, "The Chairman instructed the witness to attend to the questions properly, and to answer them in a manner becoming the dignity of the Committee."

High time, too!

(8)

Mrs. Clarke had complained, and with good reason, that Colonel Wardle had surreptitiously possessed himself of a packet of private correspondence belonging to her.

"Do you mean seriously to state that he took away these letters without your leave and without your authority?" demanded the astonished Chairman.

"Yes, he did. He had also gone off with several others."

Asked his views on this subject, the colonel made a candid admission :

“I did take away some letters belonging to Mrs. Clarke, and I do not believe she exactly approved.”

“Has she since made frequent application to you for their return ?” persisted his questioner.

“Yes, she has, and she was very much annoyed with me.”

“Was it with or without her consent that you took away these letters ?”

“I have already said how I took them. I took them from her table. She said I was not to have them, or use them, or something to that effect.”

Colonel Wardle seemed to have a strong antipathy to giving a straightforward answer to a direct question. He shuffled and wriggled, and obscured the issue in a cloud of verbiage. Thus, in his final examination, he was reminded of Mrs. Clarke’s assertion that he had promised to get Members of Parliament to support her various nominees.

“Is Mrs. Clarke’s evidence on this point true or false ?” he was asked.

Although the question could have been answered in one word, Colonel Wardle took nearly a hundred.

“Really, after I have most positively stated all that passed upon the subject, I should think the honourable gentleman is as equal to draw a conclusion as I am myself. It depends so much upon the impression at the moment, and my actions at the time. I was anxious to get the letters. That I made any positive promises I am not at all aware. By my taking away the letters, she might draw that conclusion ; but I have not the least recollection of any such promise having been made by me.”

"Did you directly, or indirectly, promise Mrs. Clarke that you would comply with her request?"

"Whether or not my taking away the letters, and making her the answer I have before repeated, might indirectly lead her to suppose I would do it is more than I can say," was all that could be got out of him.

"An unsatisfactory witness," is the not unnatural comment that these shuffling responses evoked.

Nor was the colonel happy in his choice of some of those on whose support he had counted. Thus, Captain Huxley Sandon could remember next to nothing, and what he did remember was so obviously false that he was committed to Newgate for "gross prevarication." But the conduct of General Clavering was much worse. Although he had not been called, he insisted on giving evidence against Mrs. Clarke. The step was a foolish one, as the lady produced a letter that convicted him as a liar. "This officer," it was declared, "degraded his character by gross prevarication, and some of his replies were studiously equivocatory, with no other object than to deceive." As a result, he was arrested on a warrant issued by the Speaker, and sent to join Captain Sandon in durance.

(9)

The Duke of York, much to the relief of his friends, was not called upon as a witness. Thus, no specific denials of the charges against him fell from the Royal lips. As, however, tongues were clacking unpleasantly, he wrote a letter to the Speaker, in which, "in the most solemn manner, upon my honour as a Prince," he repudiated, not only "all corrupt

participation in any of these infamous transactions, but also in the slightest knowledge or suspicion that they existed at all."

This was rather more than the public, as a whole, were prepared to swallow. While there was no acceptable evidence that he had shared in the proceeds of the unsavoury traffic, H.R.H. must have been cognisant of it. Nor could he be acquitted of a serious breach of trust, since every improper bargain thus driven by his mistress was a direct loss to the Compassionate Fund, which, administered by himself, had for its object the securing of advancement for meritorious officers unable to purchase their steps. Colonel Wardle, at any rate, inclined so strongly to this view that, supported by Lord Folkestone, he presently submitted a fresh motion—viz. that "His Majesty's faithful Commons humbly begged leave to submit to His Majesty that the Duke of York should be deprived of the command of the Army."

Still, if the Duke had his opponents (conspicuous among whom were Lord Folkestone, Sir Francis Burdett, Sir Samuel Romilly, and the smug Mr. Whitbread), he also had his champions. The most eager of them was Spencer Perceval, Chancellor of the Exchequer. The resolution proposed by him was that, "After the fullest and most attentive examination of all the evidence submitted, there is no ground for charging his Royal Highness with personal corruption, or connivance at the infamous practices disclosed in the testimony heard at the Bar."

In the debate that followed a good deal of very soiled linen was washed, and much of it was very badly mangled. On, however, being put to the vote, Perceval's resolution was

carried by a majority of 82. This was satisfactory, so far as it went. But it did not go far enough, as 196 "no's" were recorded. Thereupon the Duke did what was expected of him. He took the only measures compatible with his dignity, relinquished his appointment, and retired into private life.

"Thus terminated," says a long-winded account, "this arduous discussion on a point intimately connected with the vital interests of the Empire, a discussion which has no parallel in the annals of English history."

(10)

Despite their joint victory, Colonel Wardle soon fell out with Mrs. Clarke. The first rupture was caused by the neglect of himself and Major Dodd to redeem their promise to pay her debts and secure her a pension. Convinced that they had the whip hand, they merely laughed at her claims upon them. As a result, she threatened legal proceedings, and consulted Lord Folkestone. "I think, from what you say," was his answer, "that there will be hell to pay if the matter comes on for trial. The whole affair must then come out, and the Royal Brother (Kent), Dodd, and Wardle will be exposed. I do not know what the latter means to do. Though his part has not been so base as that of the other two, it has been a dirty one."

A second difference of opinion between the pair was an upholsterer's account. It appears that when Mrs. Clarke left her dingy quarters in the baker's shop at Hampstead, Colonel Wardle had established her in another address. The cost of furnishing this was £100; and, since he declined to honour the bill, he was sued by the tradesman. On judgment being given

against him, he launched an unsuccessful action for “conspiracy.”

The sorry business at Westminster was responsible for a flood of anonymous pamphlets. One of these threw doubts on the colonel’s bona fides, and more than hinted that his conduct in attacking the Duke had not been governed by the purest of motives.

We cannot [this observed] reconcile the propriety of that *intimacy* disclosed by the minutes of evidence, as subsisting between Mr. Wardle—a married man, the father of a numerous family—and a woman of the character and habits of Mrs. Clarke. . . . How are we to consider such a frequency of visits—such daily intercourse, such habits of domestic society, such liberties taken and allowed in an early period of their mutual acquaintance? Is this, we will venture to ask, prudence of conduct in a man wedded to an amiable wife, holding a public station in the country as a Member of Parliament? What is the construction to be put on the comportment of a gentleman who, not only thinks himself authorised to *run away* with the love-letters of a courtesan, and to investigate the correspondence of gentlemen under circumstances the most private, but also assists at her most sumptuous orgies, joins in the jovial song, partakes of the copious midnight libation, the companion of her nocturnal revels, and—to fill the measure of indecency—scruple not in the face of day to seat himself in the gilded carriage by her side?

Evidently this critic thought very little of such a person.

When the Duke resigned his military appointment, he also withdrew the last shred of his “protection” from Mrs. Clarke. It cannot be said that he had treated her well. He had promised

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to make provision for her, and he had made none. He had also left her to meet the debts incurred by their joint housekeeping in Gloucester Place. His promises were no more substantial than piecrust. When she wrote to him, asking for a beggarly £100, he sent back word that, "if she spoke to him or wrote to him again, he would put her in the pillory and in prison."

Naturally enough, Mary Anne was bitterly incensed. Still, she had something up her sleeve. What she had there were her "Memoirs," compiled from the letters penned by H.R.H. in happier days. Sir Richard Phillips, the head of the publishing firm to whom she offered them, knowing they would have a brisk sale, had, through a nominee, made tempting overtures for the manuscript, and 18,000 copies were actually printed. The fact came to the Royal ears, and their Royal owner was much perturbed. As the best method of suppressing the threatened volume, the Duke sent his secretary to "reason" with the fair author. Her figure was a fancy one. Some derogatory haggling followed. Finally, however, Mrs. Clarke accepted a solatium of £7,000 down, and a pension of £400 a year for herself and of £200 a year for each of her two daughters. When the money had been handed over, and not before, a solemn holocaust took place in the publisher's office.

Considering the fervour with which they were expressed, it is not astonishing that the Duke wanted his effusions destroyed :

•
August 4th, 1804.

MY DEAR LITTLE ANGEL,—How can I sufficiently express to my sweetest darling love the delight which her dear, pretty letter gave me, or how do justice to the emotion which it excited ! Millions, millions of thanks for it, my Angel, and be

FEMININE FRAILTY

assured that my heart is wholly fixed on your affection. . . . What a long time it is, my darling, since we parted. I shall long for Wednesday se'ennight, that I may return to my love's arms. God bless you, my own dear love ! I shall miss the post if I add more. Oh, believe me ever, to my last hour, yours and yours alone !

But, when he was put to it, the Duke could write with even less restraint :

Sandgate,

August 24th, 1804.

LOVELY CHARMER OF MY SOUL !—How can I offer sufficiently to my darling Love my thanks for her dear, dear letter, or the delight which the assurance of her love gives me ? Oh, my Angel, do me the justice to be convinced that never was a woman adored as you are. Every day, every hour, convinces me more and more that my whole happiness depends upon you alone. What a time it appears since we parted ; and with what impatience do I look forward to the day after to-morrow. There are still, however, two whole nights before I shall clasp my darling in my arms ! . . . Adieu, my sweetest, dearest Love till the day after to-morrow ; and be assured that, to my last hour, I shall ever remain yours and yours alone !

But, if she did not publish her "Memoirs," Mrs. Clarke's pen was none the less busy. It also got her into trouble, for she employed it to lampoon Mr. Vesey FitzGerald, an indiscretion which caused her to become acquainted with the inside of a prison. Her next effort at authorship was a merry work, *The Rival Princes*, purporting to be a "Faithful Narrative of Facts." In it were some acid references to Colonel Wardle, whom she now dubbed "a Mushroom Patriot" and "that Public Imposter." His domestic life was also held up to contempt ; and it was declared that, masquerading as "Mr. Brown," he had stopped at an hotel with a lady who was not Mrs. Wardle, but

"the victim of his improper passions." The object, of course, was to expose him as a hypocrite who had censured the Duke of York for an infidelity to which he himself was given. Thereupon Wardle's creature, McCallum, responded with a scurrilous pamphlet, *The Rival Queens*. This, while bitterly attacking the Duke, also belaboured Mrs. Clarke, declaring that she had aspersed the author, "an honest man, who had rescued her from the abyss of needy prostitution." Other uncomplimentary epithets were "public plunderer and destroyer of private character."

Altogether, a good deal of pot-and-kettle business.

A condition attaching to the promised pension was that Mary Anne Clarke should live abroad for the rest of her life. She made no difficulty about this, for she had had as much of England as she wanted. On leaving London, she went to Brussels, "where," says a spiteful chronicler, "her previous history being scarcely known, she was well received ; and she married her daughters without any enquiry as to the fathers to whom she might ascribe them." From Brussels, she transferred herself to Paris. There she lived for nearly forty years in an odour of outward respectability, establishing a *salon* where everybody of distinction among the English visitors to the capital called upon her. "Her manners," says Gronow, "were exceedingly agreeable, and to the latest day she retained traces of past beauty. She was lively, sprightly, and full of fun ; and indulged in innumerable anecdotes of the members of the Royal Family of England."

In 1852 Mary Anne Clarke died at Boulogne, in her seventy-sixth year. A long life, and, all things considered, a merry one.

(12)

Despite what had come out during the enquiry, the Duke did not remain permanently in the wilderness. A couple of years later, when things had “blown over” somewhat, and the public had more important affairs with which to busy itself, pressure was put upon him to return to his old position, which had been kept warm for him by Sir David Dundas. All things considered, it was just as well he accepted, as—but for this little slip—at the Horse Guards he was undoubtedly the right man in the right place. His gifts were administrative ; and, during his long régime there, he worked conscientiously to purge the “system” of the many abuses that had crept into it. He was not called “the soldier’s friend” for nothing. Much to the fury and contempt of the disciplinarians, who dubbed it “coddling,” he established schools of instruction for ambitious non-commissioned officers and privates ; he kept chaplains and doctors up to the mark ; and he made it his special care to see that pay and rations and clothing and equipment were not withheld by swindling contractors.

The Duke of York’s last illness began in the summer of 1826, on his return from the Ascot meeting of that year. A change of air being recommended, he went to Brighton. But, as he could not shake off his symptoms, which had developed into dropsy, he was brought back to Town. Following the approved practice of the day, he was “tapped” by the doctors, and “twenty-two pints of water were drawn from him.” So far, however, from this heroic treatment effecting any beneficial result, the Royal invalid only grew worse. On Christmas Day he made his will, and received the Sacrament from the

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Bishop of London. After this, he gradually sank ; and on January 5th, 1827, he was found dead in his chair.

“ Such,” wrote Sir Herbert Taylor, who for years had been the Duke’s private secretary, “was the end of this amiable, kind, and excellent man, after a long and painful struggle, borne with exemplary resolution and resignation.”

Sir Walter Scott also composed a glowing panegyric, commencing :

In the person of his Royal Highness, the Duke of York, we may justly say, in the language of Scripture, “There has fallen this day in our Israel a Prince and a great man.”

Reference, of course, had to be made to the unhappy business which had temporarily clouded H.R.H.’s career. Sir Walter’s pen was quite equal to the task of putting it as well as possible :

. . . To complete a portrait, the lights as well as the shades must be inserted ; and in their foibles, as well as their good qualities, princes are the property of history. . . . The Duke had formed, with a female called Clarke, a connection justifiable certainly neither by the laws of religion nor morality. Imprudently he suffered this woman to express her wishes to him for the promotion of two or three officers, to whose preferment there could be no other objection than that they were recommended by such a person. . . . The examination of this woman and her various profligate intimates before the House of Commons occupied that assembly for nearly three months ; and that with an intentness of anxiety seldom equalled. . . . And thus, as, according to Solomon, “A dead fly can produce the most precious unguent,” was the honourable fame, acquired by the services of a lifetime, obscured by the consequences of what the gay world would have termed a venial levity.

There was more—several columns more—in the same strain.

F E M I N I N E F R A I L T Y

Mary Anne Clarke, with her amours and paramours, has long been forgotten. Frederick, Duke of York, however, still lives in the Royal Military School which he established for the “legitimate offspring” of soldiers (he would have nothing to do with the other sort) at Chelsea ; and his effigy stands to this day on the summit of a tall column, erected by public subscription, in Waterloo Place.

“Put up so high that his creditors could not touch him,” said the wags.

MARY GORDON-BAILLIE



MRS. GORDON-BAILLIE
“Society” Adventuress

[*Facing p. 135*

MARY GORDON-BAILLIE

(1)

FORTY years ago, a topical song in an Edinburgh pantomime declared (among other things) that :

*When Mrs. Gordon-Baillie bought a thing,
She gave a cheque for it.
But, when it was presented, there was
Nothing to expect for it !*

This doggerel, which ran to a dozen verses, was always received with rapturous applause and loudly encored. The reason was, its subject matter happened to be a distinct home-thrust ; for the lady whose bizarre financial methods were thus chronicled by the red-nosed pantomime comedian was an adventuress who had swindled various local celebrities out of considerable sums.

Although there was no real mystery about it, the woman who, as Mrs. Gordon-Baillie, afterwards occupied so much public attention, always made one about her birth. Thus, according to herself, she was born at Dundee, in 1858, the “unacknowledged daughter of a Scottish nobleman.” According, however, to the parish register, she was born at Peterhead, in 1848, the illegitimate offspring of John Sutherland, an itinerant pedlar, and Catherine Bruce, a washerwoman.

At the age of eighteen, Mary Ann Sutherland, as the girl was known in the family circle, declared she had received a “call.”

It was not, however, as her hard-working mother had hoped, to the domestic mangle, but to "religion." Blossoming into publicity as an "evangelist," she conducted a series of meetings in different Scottish villages, where she "held forth with much zeal and unction." For material support during this period, she relied on "silver collections." Apparently they were somewhat restricted, as, at the same time, she was also employed in a model lodging-house in Dundee.

As these dual activities offered little scope for the development of her ambition (which was to fill a much wider niche), somewhere about the year 1870 Mary Ann left Dundee and went to London. How she supported herself there is not known. Still, she must at one period have got into low water, for she was summoned at the Mansion House for bilking a cabman. This, however, was but a temporary eclipse; and it is obvious that she afterwards discovered a remunerative line of business, and she managed to make a prolonged tour in Belgium, France, and Italy. She also travelled very comfortably (not to say luxuriously), putting up at the best hotels, and employing the services of a courier.

The tour was not without incident. Thus, while in Rome, in the summer of 1872, she called on the minister of the Scottish Church there. After discussing theology with him, she said that she intended establishing a school near the Pincio Gardens where English girls would be taught "Protestant Christianity." As the prospectus she exhibited to subscribers bore, among others, the name of Lord Shaftesbury, the scheme aroused a good deal of interest, and the British Ambassador undertook to become a "patron."

But the promises of the prospectus were not fulfilled. No

school developed from them ; and, at the end of a month, the proselytising Miss Sutherland left Italy. She left under something of a cloud. As a matter of fact, she was "wanted" by the Turin police for neglecting to liquidate various hotel bills. There were also reports to her financial detriment in other towns she had visited.

Miss Sutherland was next heard of in Scotland, where she resumed her evangelical activities with fresh vigour. The programme she now offered her patrons had for its specific purpose the "Weaning of the Italians from the Errors of Catholicism to the Truths of Presbyterianism." It was an ambitious scheme. Still, it proved very attractive in Edinburgh and she won the hearts of several prominent clergymen and philanthropic ladies. But, as soon as a good round sum had been collected, the organiser disappeared. She also left behind her a number of debts, one of which was to a "converted cabman," with whose presence on her platform she had made great play.

Edinburgh having become too hot to hold her, she went off with her tracts and subscription-lists to Dundee. There she took a villa, which she furnished on credit. Her gifts must have included a singularly persuasive tongue, since the Dundee tradesmen (who had never been noted for a trusting disposition) supplied her with quantities of goods without demanding cash, either in advance or on delivery. At last she went a little too far. This was to the nearest pawnbroker, where she pledged the furniture and goods thus obtained. As a result, in December 1872 she was convicted of a series of frauds and sentenced by an unsympathetic sheriff to nine months' imprisonment in Perth Gaol.

On being set at liberty, she went to Liverpool. There she changed her name to Anne Sutherland-Bruce. She did not, however, change her methods ; and, equipped with another flowery prospectus, she collected subscriptions for conducting a "Girls' School in Rome on Protestant Principles." This cause was pleaded by her with such eloquence that funds came in very satisfactorily. "She had," said somebody who figured among subscribers, "a beautiful face, and appeared a suitable person to undertake such work. Yet she expressed her religious convictions somewhat oddly."

Possibly it was due to this latter fact that the flow of cash suddenly stopped. Suspicion was aroused by two circumstances. First of all, "her bonnets were much too smart for a woman engaged in religious welfare," and then, "one morning she was discovered reading a novel." This was more than Liverpool could swallow, and Miss Sutherland-Bruce found it advisable to seek a fresh hunting-ground. As was her custom, she also left behind her a considerable indebtedness to the local tradesmen.

(2)

The new field of endeavour was London. There she elected to be known as Miss Ogilvie Bruce. Representing herself as a woman of fortune, she announced that she wanted to buy a newspaper and to conduct a theatre. On the strength of this, she had no difficulty in getting possession of a furnished house in a good district. But although her journalistic plans came to nothing, she did form a theatrical connection by marrying a member of the Carl Rosa Opera Company. This was a certain Thomas White, whose *nom du théâtre* was Knight Aston. The

union does not appear to have been one of hearts, for the bridegroom very soon left his bride and slipped off to Australia.

Mrs. Thomas White, as a grass-widow, evidently regarded society as a Tom Tiddler's ground which existed for the sole purpose of being exploited by her. Representing herself as the "Countess of Moray," she ran up bills for whatever took her fancy. A great many things did this ; and she soon amassed a large stock of jewels and furs and clothes. With a view to possible eventualities, perhaps, one such account was for a supply of baby linen. Hypnotised by her manner, and the smart brougham (hired) in which she drove up to their establishment, obsequious shopmen offered her credit as a matter of course. In fact, cash appeared to be the very last thing they wanted. It was certainly the very last thing they got. When they grew really pressing, she avoided them by changing her address and adopting another name. Simplicity itself. Also, quite unoriginal.

She had aliases by the dozen. For the most part, she preferred such as had an "aristocratic" ring ; and among those she adopted in addition to that of the Countess of Moray were Lady Bruce, Miss Hope-Johnstone, and Miss Ogilvie Whyte. It was, however, as Mrs. Gordon-Baillie that she was best known. This alias she first assumed in 1883. The Gordon part of it was intended to suggest a connection with the Earl of Aberdeen ; and the Baillie part of it one with Joanna Baillie, the dramatist and poetess. As she never did things by halves, she also adopted a crest, on which were blended the arms of the Bruces and the Sutherlands, surmounted by the motto "*Fuimus.*" A motto of sinister import to unsatisfied creditors, for she certainly lived up to it.

Somewhere about the year 1884 Mrs. Gordon-Baillie engineered a really big *coup*. This was to establish a close intimacy with a wealthy and half-witted old baronet, Sir Richard Duckworth King. She ensnared him to such an extent that he set her up in a house in Mayfair, and let her draw on him for £18,000. Not satisfied with this haul, she also induced Sir Richard, who was as infatuated as he was senile, to back bills for considerable sums. He would probably have been despoiled of everything he possessed, had not his relatives interfered and compelled him to file his petition. As it was, only a remnant of his fortune was preserved.

The baronet's "paper" was discounted for her by a man with whom his Delilah was having (but of course unknown to him) a second *liaison*. This was a certain Robert Percival Frost, whose other activities included the promotion of bogus companies. A City shark of the usual pattern, Frost posed in the City as a "financier." He was entirely without means. Yet he exploited the public to such an extent that, before long, he was adjudicated a bankrupt, with liabilities of £130,000, and assets next to nothing. This system of "finance" being so nearly akin to her own, Mrs. Gordon Baillie decided to join forces with him. Since (oblivious of her earlier vows to the Carl Rosa chorister) she had presented him with three pledges of affection, she considered it as well to give him brevet rank of "husband" when they set up house-keeping together.

Still toying with the footlights, as offering a remunerative field in which to exhibit her prowess, Mrs. Gordon Baillie next undertook to rent the Imperial Theatre. She also advertised for a company to tour with her in South Africa, and

engaged a number of actors and actresses for this purpose. When, however, she discovered that the lessee wanted his rent in cash, and not in promises (which was all she could offer him), she abruptly broke off the negotiations, and sought another method of living on the public. She did not have to look further than Scotland.

In the winter of 1884-5 the position of the crofters in the Isle of Skye was attracting a good deal of sympathy among the charitable public. They were threatened with starvation and ejectment from their homes ; and police and troops were being employed to put down the rioting that had arisen. This was sternly suppressed. A number of the alleged ringleaders were clapped into prison ; and their wives and children were compelled to seek the cold shelter of the workhouse. So far, however, from having the desired result, this attitude was resented, and the emissaries of the landlords were roughly handled when they attempted to serve ejectment notices. Such resistance being construed as "obstruction," the help of the Crown was invoked to restore law and order. A man-of-war was despatched, with a body of armed marines ; and, "by a combination of skill and secrecy," so declared the official version, a number of rioters were arrested and lodged in prison. It does not read like a very creditable exploit. Nor did it soothe the malcontents.

In this juncture there suddenly appeared on the scene a woman who announced herself eager and ready to champion the cause of the islanders. One of her first actions had a touch of drama, for it was to present the crofters' leader with a weapon which she described as "her grandfather's sword." The gift was accompanied by a letter, declaring it to be "a

small mark of a lady sympathiser's interest in your gallant struggle against oppression." But her interest was also practical, for she distributed blankets and warm clothing, and also started a subscription list with which to raise additional funds. Besides this, she wrote letters to the papers, took the chair at public meetings, and organised bazaars and concerts, and, one way and another, collected a substantial sum for the benefit of the wretched crofters. By her tact and sympathy she broke down the opposition of the landlords, and also interested the Government in a scheme which would automatically relieve the situation. This was to furnish the dispossessed islanders, and their wives and children, with new homes in the Colonies. As the plan looked workable enough, on paper, official approval was given to it, and its author announced her intention of leaving for Australia, to complete the details.

(3)

The "Crofters' Champion," as she was known, was none other than Mrs. Gordon-Baillie. All the Highland papers were full of her, and the "philanthropic work" she was doing. There was, however, a somewhat guarded report of her activities published in a London journal :

Mrs. Gordon-Baillie, a descendant of the great Joanna, is at present a notable figure in the Skye Highlands. She has attended and addressed crofter meetings on the Brae Side, and passed a night in a croft—by the way, a very practical form of interest, when one considers their peat fires and chimneyless interiors. In return for her charitable actions, one Scotch paper speaks of her as a *Petroleuse* and *Bonnet Rouge*; and another, more merciful, says she is collecting material for a novel, while

MARY GORDON-BAILLIE

the police and military authorities subject her to a close surveillance. All seem determined, if she desires to do good, that she shall do it by stealth. A London and Edinburgh firm of publishers have requested her to prepare for them a book on the subject. It is believed she has consented, and intends devoting the proceeds to the alleviation of the distress prevalent in Skye, and more especially the great distress among the crofter women.

A journalist on whose susceptible heart she had wrought havoc followed this with a “character sketch” expressed in more generous terms :

It has been the happy lot of Mrs. Gordon-Baillie to crowd a great deal of success into a short life. Well known as the author of some charming Scotch lyrics, she is, indeed, a Highlander of the Highlands. The cause of the crofters has lately drawn her somewhat into the world of politics. Her influence has since been exerted with some success in pressing the Government to bring forward the Crofter Rating Bill now before Parliament. Mrs. Gordon-Baillie is well known in London artistic society ; and we may add that she possesses a handsome and striking appearance. . . . To combine a stirring public career with all the beauties of our gentle English home life demands the utmost of any nature ; and that Mrs. Gordon-Baillie has met the demand in its fullness better describes her character than anything else.

Enthralled readers were also given some particulars of her physical, and other, charms :

Mrs. Gordon-Baillie’s appearance is striking, reminding one pleasantly of Sir Walter Scott’s portrait of Helen MacGregor. Her bust and build may be styled Flaxmanesque, and her power of dress is amazing. . . . Mrs. Gordon-Baillie has not only written dainty verse, but has largely translated from her favourite Italian literature. Her Scotch lyrics, however, are

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her happiest efforts ; and some of them are very quaint, reproducing the old vigour and heather scent so noticeable in the ballads of the North Countries.

No specimens of her Muse were given. Several, however, were accorded hospitality in the “Poets’ Corner” of the *Railway and Tramway Express*. One of these efforts, written to her young daughter, was the following :

An’ when thou’rt grown a maiden fair,
An’ time’s snows tinge thy mother’s hair,
Her old age frailties be thy care, my Paddy !

This, in the light of after events, seemed inspired by the spirit of prophecy.

Not to be outdone by this, a second accredited organ of funkeyism went even further in its panegyrics :

Mrs. Gordon-Baillie is a Highlander, a fine daughter of a generous race. She possesses in large proportion the love of country, poetical fervour, and warm temper which are her birthright. When things looked black, and troubles menaced Skye, she visited the crofters in the depth of a northern winter, and used all her personal influence in the cause of order. Although a staunch Tory, she paid for the defence of the crofters, alleging as a reason that the cause of Conservatism and the cause of Justice were identical. . . . In her midland country home, as well as in Skye, many a one is thankful for the existence of Mrs. Gordon-Baillie.

The “midland country home” to which attention was thus directed was Barton Hall, in Staffordshire, to which retreat, and not to Australia, Mrs. Gordon-Baillie had gone on leaving Scotland. While there she was joined by the plausible and smooth-tongued Mr. Frost, who had temporarily abandoned

his financial activities in London. At Barton Hall the pair maintained a large establishment, with a retinue of servants, and a stable filled with carriages and horses. They also exhibited a marked fondness for livestock, since they kept a quantity of goats, pigs, and poultry.

In September of that year (1886) creditors grew so pressing that Mrs. Gordon-Baillie, leaving her alleged "husband" to cope with them, auctioned the furniture and effects and moved to Margate. On arriving there, she took a house for herself and children, with a governess and servants complete. As such an establishment suggested the command of ample funds, the local tradesmen were glad to supply her with anything she wanted. She wanted a great deal. Still, all went well until the first quarter-day. Then all went wrong ; and affairs assumed another complexion. The landlord wanted his rent ; the servants wanted their wages ; and the tradesmen wanted their accounts settled. Still, it was not until the gas company cut off the gas that Mrs. Gordon-Baillie felt it time to leave England and make her long deferred visit to the Antipodes.

(4)

It was during the winter of 1886 that Mrs. Gordon-Baillie arrived in Australia. The financial results were, at first, very satisfactory. The warm-hearted citizens of Melbourne and Sydney, touched by the eloquent appeal she made on behalf of her protégés, the "poor crofters," loosened their purse-strings and subscribed liberally to social triumphs also. The Bishop of Tasmania vouched for her, and received her into his house as his guest. Colonial bigwigs followed suit. They

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took the chair at her meetings ; and in Victoria (where she was received at Government House by Lord and Lady Loch) she was given a grant of 70,000 acres of pastureland on which to settle the dispossessed families of the crofters. As a natural result, she was also paragraphed and interviewed and “written up” everywhere.

A local Boswell, who contributed “society gossip” to a Melbourne journal, set the pace for his colleagues :

From the whirl and gaiety of fashionable London circles, of which she was a distinguished member, Mrs. Gordon-Baillie travelled to Skye during the military occupation, to enquire into the cause of the disaffection among the crofters. She found their poverty and their wrongs to be such that she refused to accept further rents from her own tenants, and declared herself their ardent champion.

For some time all went merry as the proverbial marriage bell. Suddenly, however, a jangling note was struck. It chanced that the Rev. Dr. Cameron Lees, of Edinburgh, was visiting Australia. On being asked by her for his support and interest, he expressed doubts as to the purity of the lady’s motives. What was still more upsetting was a hint from him that subscribers should be furnished with a balance-sheet. Worse followed, for a shrewd young Melbourne journalist, who happened to have some old newspaper cuttings that dealt with an episode in the Dundee police-court in 1872, wrote to England asking some very pointed questions on the subject. The result was, the Colonial Office had to look into the matter. As soon as this was done, cables were despatched from Scotland Yard suggesting that the lady with the subscription-list was not the woman she represented herself to be. They added

quite plainly who she really was, and forwarded particulars of the various equivocal transactions in which she had been engaged.

The result of these disclosures was a marked and sudden “slump” in the stock of Mrs. Gordon-Baillie, and the drying-up of the stream of subscriptions. Wealthy squatters and pastoralists who, at her request, had pulled out their fountain-pens to write cheques for the “Crofters’ Fund,” put them back again in their pockets. Some of them, too, even stopped the cheques they had already written. As if this were not enough, a Melbourne dairyman sued her for a milk bill.

(5)

Mrs. Gordon-Baillie could take a hint. She took one now. Realising that she had exhausted both her welcome and her credit, she booked a passage to England by the first steamer. Although she was accompanied by Mr. Frost (who had joined her during the latter portion of the tour), she entered herself on the passenger-list as Mrs. Roberts. When, however, she landed in England, she once more became Mrs. Gordon-Baillie. It was under this flag that she carried on a vigorous press campaign. Her first and most conspicuous capture was Mr. W. T. Stead, of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Since any woman (especially an attractive one) who had a story of woe to tell could always get round him, he proved an easy victim. The first-fruits took the form of an “interview,” supplied by the pushful Frost. This was followed by photographs and columns of descriptive matter dealing with her “good work” among the

crofters, and disinterested efforts to transplant them to happier surroundings in Australia.

The editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* soon had reason to regret opening his columns to thus espousing the woman whose activities were being so lustily sung there by the plausible Mr. Frost. It led to unexpected embarrassments ; and a number of tradesmen, forming the opinion that his interest in her entitled them to do so, asked him to discharge various bills that she had incurred. When he disclaimed any such responsibility, his protests met with incredulous shrugs.

The Press can be a hindrance, as well as a help ; and publicity can be pushed too far. This was what happened now ; and the Stead interview, together with the photographs and paragraphs and editorial references to her philanthropic endeavours had repercussions in Edinburgh, to which place the subject of them next betook herself.

“A cunning woman is a knavish fool,” says Lord Lyttelton. He might have had Mrs. Gordon-Baillie as his model, for, with all her cunning, in Edinburgh she committed a childish error of judgment. This was to tell a local reporter that she owned large estates in Argyllshire. Unlike his London colleague, the Scottish editor to whom the interview was offered adopted the elementary precaution of not printing it until he had consulted a local directory. Since this omitted her name from the list of landowners, he felt suspicious. Thereupon, he had a word with the police, and the police decided that it would be just as well to look into the matter. The result was embodied in an official report, headed, “Enquiry regarding an Adventuress who has recently been passing herself off in Edinburgh and elsewhere as Mrs. Gordon-Baillie.”

As a matter of fact, the Edinburgh police were not really surprised that questions should have arisen concerning this mysterious visitor to the Scottish capital. They were thoroughly familiar with her "past," and her *dossier*, going back to the Dundee days of sixteen years earlier, was already among their records. What, however, they were particularly concerned with just then were her Edinburgh adventures since she left London. These were soon unravelled. She had arrived during February with one small box. Disliking hotels, since she knew from experience that managers had a habit of demanding that bills should be settled promptly, she went to a boarding-house in Melville Street.

Mrs. Gordon-Baillie's visit to Edinburgh only lasted five days. But she made the most of them. Her programme there was similar to her London one. Thus, she began by hiring a brougham, and calling on a number of business firms, from whom she ordered a variety of expensive goods. Scotch "canniness" is proverbial. Yet now it went badly astray, for, although they were drawn on a London bank, the cheques she offered in the Princes Street shops were accepted without demur, and the "purchases" were delivered.

She had timed her arrival well, since the troubles of the crofters were once more attracting public attention, and there was much public sympathy with two women who had just been sent to prison for assaulting a landlord. As the opportunity of championing them was not to be missed, she made herself known to the treasurer of the Crofters' Defence Fund, and secured his interest by telling him that "her husband was part proprietor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*." She next called on one of the judges, Lord Craighill, and persuaded him to sign a

petition for the release of the crofters who were still in prison. Having done this, she visited a prominent Edinburgh man, Professor Blackie, and aroused his sympathetic interest to such an extent that he gave her letters to the Lord Provost and other magistrates. From these authorities she received permission to visit the Calton Gaol and talk to the women there.

That evening she went to a dinner-party given by Professor Blackie, taking with her, as a gift for her host, an elaborate bouquet. It had been procured on credit from a florist, at a cost of one guinea.

After bamboozling both a Colonial Government and Mr. Stead, it was a simple enough matter for such a woman to get on the soft side of Professor Blackie. With Hymettus bees buzzing in his bonnet, and a heart throbbing with sympathy under his plaid, he accepted without enquiry the circumstantial account she gave him of her efforts to improve the condition of the crofters. He must have been impressed, for the next day he sent her one of his books, together with a characteristically exuberant letter, asking her to give him a photograph which should supply "a true reflection of that rare mixture of Doric strength and historic grace which is your dower." It was not until she had left Edinburgh (and the bills for the bouquet and the portrait were delivered to himself) that he altered his opinion.

"I never met a woman who talked more sense," he wrote to a fellow-sufferer. "Her manners were faultless, and her appearance and bearing that of the lady whom she represented herself to be. I never met such an extraordinary combination of head and heart and hand. . . . She would have deceived the very devil himself."

Well, for all his scholarship, she certainly deceived Professor Blackie.

Notwithstanding the triumphs that accompanied it, the Edinburgh visit came to an abrupt end. As soon as she had left, a number of tradesmen, bringing with them dishonoured cheques, called at her boarding-house to enquire for her. Much to their annoyance, they were told that she had gone to London, leaving no address. It was then that the local newspapers began to give her unwelcome publicity. In the hope of stopping further disclosures, Mrs. Gordon-Baillie threatened actions for libel. She did not, however, proceed with them. Still, she did attempt to stem the flood of criticism by inviting anybody who had ever sent her a subscription on behalf of the crofters to communicate with a well-known firm of solicitors. The gesture was a good one. Unfortunately, it was promptly discounted by the fact that the firm she mentioned declined to have anything to do with her. Thereupon she, always fertile of resource, sent a circular letter to the Press :

I have hitherto been taught that it is bad manners to speak while other people are talking. When everyone has done, I shall know how to answer.

But apparently the time did not come, as she made no further response.

(6)

During this period of her London career (the summer of 1888) Mrs. Gordon-Baillie, together with the accomplished Mr. Frost, to whom she still gave the brevet rank of "husband," was living in Westminster. A member of the household

there was a certain Robert Gigner. His nominal rôle was that of butler. His real function, however, was to spread stories of the "wealth" of his mistress, and thus induce tradesmen to supply goods without requiring their bills to be settled on delivery. A second direction in which he was employed was that of saying "not at home" to unwelcome callers. He had to say this very often, for dishonoured cheques were continually arriving, and furious creditors were demanding personal interviews and threatening legal proceedings.

For some months Mrs. Gordon-Baillie lived on the edge of a mine. At last it exploded. Despairing of getting satisfaction by any other method, an individual whom she had swindled out of a houseful of furniture went so far as to lodge a formal complaint at the Westminster police-court. The magistrate was sympathetic, and directed him to consult the Treasury solicitor. Having looked into the matter, the authorities issued a warrant for the arrest, not only of Mrs. Gordon-Baillie, but also of her accomplices, Frost and Gigner. When a detective called to execute this, the butler, acting on his standing instructions, declared that his master and mistress were "out of town." As this, however, was the sort of story he was accustomed to hear at such times, the Scotland Yard emissary resolved to investigate for himself. Having done so, he was not astonished to come upon the couple lurking in an upstairs room.

The next morning all three appeared in the dock at Westminster police-court, charged with conspiring to obtain money and goods by false pretences. This charge was supported by a long string of dressmakers, tailors, milliners, florists, hatters, and provision merchants, etc. The list of items—which ranged from sacks of coal and groceries to

travelling-trunks and elaborately fitted dressing-cases—supplied to Mrs. Gordon-Baillie included a pair of gold-mounted spectacles. Although their quality was declared to be “superior,” they had not enabled their recipient to read the optician’s letter pointing out that her cheque for them had been dishonoured. Mr. Frost, too, was an equally unsatisfactory customer, and had obtained for his own use enough clothes and cigars and wine to stock a shop. When the plundered tradesmen appeared in person, to get their bills settled, it was always to find a notice on the front door, “Family left town. Call again.”

Some interesting particulars of Mrs. Gordon-Baillie’s adventures in the financial world were also elicited. It seems incredible, but, without requiring her to deposit a shilling, or to give a reference, a well-known bank had furnished her with a cheque-book ; and it was not until she had drawn thirty-nine cheques, all of which were subsequently dishonoured, that she was asked to consider her account closed. By that time, however, and with the help of Mr. Frost, and the invaluable Gigner, she had cleared a considerable sum.

Her “system” was as elementary as it was equivocal. It merely took the old familiar form of writing a cheque beyond the value of the article “purchased.” The difference would then be pocketed in cash ; the cheque dishonoured ; and the goods pledged. The pawnbroking transactions were carried out on a big scale ; and, attended by the helpful Mr. Gigner, duly liveried and cockaded, she would drive up to a selected three brass balls establishment with a cab full of sheets, linen, crockery, pictures, furniture, books, and dresses, etc., and pledge them for what they would fetch.

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After hearing this evidence, and expressing the customary surprise at the gullibility of their victims, the magistrate announced that he would commit all three prisoners for trial. Thereupon, Mrs. Gordon-Baillie's counsel was very indignant.

"A cruel and unjust assertion has been advanced," he said, "to the effect that this lady has been in prison in Scotland. The conduct of the police is most improper. My client should be admitted to bail."

"As she appears to be a lady of somewhat wandering propensities, I must refuse the request," was the magisterial response.

Owing to the fact that he managed to break his leg while in prison, Gigner, the servant of this precious pair, did not join his master and mistress when they figured in the dock at the Central Criminal Court. He thus had no opportunity of clearing his character, such as it was. Still, it is doubtful if he could have been convicted. After all, his rôle in the sorry business had been a very subordinate one; and he had merely served as the connecting link between the tradesmen's tills and the cash-box of his employers.

(7)

The trial of Mrs. Gordon-Baillie and Robert Frost was held on October 24th-25th, 1888. To sustain the charge of conspiring together to obtain goods by fraud, it was necessary to show that the couple were not married. Mr. Poland, for the prosecution, found this a simple task, as he had abundant evidence that the Thomas White whom the female prisoner had married in 1876 was still in the land of the living.

Thereupon, her counsel, realising that this part of the defence was demolished, admitted that her later union with Robert Frost was "irregular." Beyond this, however, he would not go.

Except that a woman was the principal defendant, there was nothing novel about the proceedings. They followed the customary course of such trials. As a preliminary, a long array of dressmakers, milliners, jewellers, provision merchants, and jobmasters, etc., all looking rather foolish, went into the box and said that they had supplied her with quantities of goods in return for dishonoured cheques. She had also, it transpired, sent her servant, Robert Gigner, to a tailor to get measured for a livery. The livery was duly made, and the account was forwarded. The bill, however, had not been settled.

These witnesses were followed by a contingent of pawnbrokers' assistants, to swear that Mrs. Gordon-Baillie had pledged with them the goods she had thus secured. Yet her *dossier* was well known, and she figured on every West End tradesman's "cautionary-list." In fact, a detective (who, by the way, described Professor Blackie as "Lord Provost of Edinburgh") said that Scotland Yard had received complaints about her for upwards of fifteen years ; and that during this period she had gone under forty-one aliases.

Where Mrs. Gordon-Baillie's companion in the dock, Frost, was concerned, a half-hearted, but unchivalrous, attempt was made to establish the fact that he had merely been her tool. His record, however, discounted any such assumption. Still, it appeared that, although he had adopted such devious methods of "finance," he belonged to a good family, and had

won a scholarship at Marlborough. His mother had also endeavoured to have the prosecution withdrawn by settling a number of the bills he had incurred.

No witnesses were called for the defence. As a matter of fact there were none to call. Still, Mrs. Gordon Baillie's counsel, Mr. Kemp, Q.C., showed himself a vigorous champion of his interesting client. Notwithstanding what had been said as to her humble origin, he still declared that she was "a lady by birth and education," and indignantly repudiated the suggestion that her moral character left anything to be desired. His theory was that she really was married to Robert Frost (unkindly referred to by the prosecution as her "paramour"), since she had divorced her operatic spouse. None the less, he had to admit that he could not bring any actual evidence to this effect. As for the various malfeasances with which she was charged, he glossed over these and endeavoured to explain them away by arguing that they amounted to nothing beyond "illegal pawning"; and insisted that such transactions were merely debts.

"Any member of Society," he observed pathetically, "might be in the same position if called upon short notice to meet her liabilities."

Mrs. Gordon-Baillie could, by dint of long practice, fascinate a great many people. For once, however, she had met her match. She could not fascinate the members of the jury. In less than five minutes they found her guilty, as also her accomplice. Thereupon, the judge, showing what he thought of the pair, sentenced Robert Frost to eighteen months' imprisonment, and Mrs. Gordon-Baillie to five years' penal servitude.

MARY GORDON-BAILLIE

The mask of the philanthropist goes ill with the cloak of the adventuress. For all her pretensions, and her long and imposing list of aliases, the woman who elected to be known as Mrs. Gordon-Baillie was nothing less than an impudent and systematic swindler. As such, she met with her well merited deserts. While it is, of course, no excuse, her victims had only to thank themselves. But for their gullibility, she could not have lasted a month. Yet she lasted seventeen years.

MARIA MANNING



MARIA MANNING
Murderess of Patrick O'Connor

MARIA MANNING

(1)

MARIA MANNING has two claims to notoriety. She murdered Patrick O'Connor ; and she destroyed the vogue of black satin for feminine wear. In the former activity she was assisted by her husband ; in the latter one, she had no help.

Switzerland had the dishonour of being Mrs. Manning's native country. She was born there Marie de Roux, the daughter of a respectable couple, at Lausanne. With a laudable desire to "better herself," as soon as she grew up she went to England, where her ambition was to become a housekeeper. As a preliminary, she entered the service of Lady Palk, in the more humble capacity of maid.

While thus employed, she appears to have given full satisfaction ; and when she left, it was with a batch of glowing testimonials, one of which declared her to be of an "affectionate and pious disposition." Hence, she was very soon offered a situation with the family of the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland. This was in the establishment of their daughter, Lady Blantyre, then living at Stafford House. As before—being clever, adaptable, and hard working—she acquitted herself in a fashion that left nothing to be desired.

Although occupying no more exalted position than that of a lady's maid, Marie de Roux was something of a "catch." She had been treated liberally by her mistress and visitors ;

and, instead of squandering them, had banked her wages and tips. Also, on the deaths of her parents, she had inherited a few hundred pounds. Added to this, she was an attractive-looking young woman, with a good figure and complexion, and was always smartly dressed. Hence, it is not surprising that she should have had a number of "followers."

One such, with whom her name was coupled, was a certain Patrick O'Connor, a man employed as a gauger in the Customs Department at the London docks. He had first met her (without the formality of an introduction) while she was with her mistress at Boulogne, where he himself happened to be spending a holiday. On his return to London, he had kept up the acquaintance, and visited her at Stafford House. Marie de Roux, too, for all her demureness, also visited him at his lodgings. Before long, the pair were on such intimate terms that, if they happened to have had any strict regard for propriety, the purchase of a wedding ring would have been imperative. But O'Connor's intentions towards the attractive and well-dowered Swiss girl appear to have been strictly dishonourable. Indeed, if a shocked biographer is to be credited, they were "nothing less than to obtain possession of her person without first accepting matrimonial responsibility."

While Marie de Roux had shown herself not overburdened with a rigid morality, there were limits to the lengths to which she was prepared to go. This was one of them. When, however, she informed O'Connor that she expected to be led to the altar by him, he abruptly broke off the "friendship" that had sprung up between them.

It was an action for which he was to pay ; and to pay dearly.

Although she wrote him a reproachful letter on the subject, it is questionable if Marie de Roux had any real regard for Patrick O'Connor. What, however, she did have was a very real regard for his money. Her nature was essentially avaricious, and O'Connor had the reputation of being a "warm" man. It was not undeserved, for, in addition to his job as a gauger, he carried on the more profitable business of money-lending at usury among his fellow employees in the Customs. Altogether, he was said to have amassed a capital of £10,000, the bulk of which he had invested in railway shares.

(2)

Despite his scurvy treatment of her, Marie de Roux did not quarrel openly with O'Connor. Outwardly, at any rate, she remained on good terms with him. As it happened, too, she had a second string to her bow. This was one Frederick Manning, a guard in the service of the Great Western Railway Company, whose acquaintance she had made while she was living with Lady Palk in Devonshire. Having discovered that her weak point was money, he represented himself as occupying a much better position than was really the case. In this he was successful ; and Marie de Roux, taking him at his own valuation (and incidentally wanting to show O'Connor that his defection had not troubled her), agreed to become Mrs. Manning.

Her ideas being somewhat grandiose, the bride (who received from the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland their good wishes and a handsome present) resolved that the wedding should be a "function," and the ceremony took place at St.

James's Church, Piccadilly, in the summer of 1847. The bridegroom would have much preferred the simpler routine of a registry office, but he had no voice in the matter. He was a weak-willed person, with a fondness for alcohol, and then, as afterwards, despite the fact that she had promised to love, honour, and obey him, very much under his partner's thumb. Still, he did persuade her to do one thing. This was to change her baptismal name from Marie to Maria.

Shortly after his marriage, Manning left the railway company with which he had been employed. Perhaps it would be better put to say that the railway company left him. It appeared that a box of bullion was stolen in transit from a train ; and, as he was on duty at the time as guard, he fell under suspicion of being concerned in this business, and also in several other thefts that had occurred.

Having lost his position with the railway company, Frederick Manning induced his wife to invest part of her capital in a public house at Taunton. As he drank more beer than he sold, the investment proved unprofitable. Returning to London, his thoughts still running on beer, he took a second public house at Haggerston. This, too, was a failure, and swallowed up another £100. The pair then moved to Bermondsey, where, in the summer of 1849, they rented an unfurnished house in Minver Place. Since it was larger than they could afford, they proposed to have a lodger.

Although she was now a wife, Mrs. Manning was quite ready to resume her intrigue with Patrick O'Connor. He, too, declared himself of the same opinion, and agreed to become a lodger in her house. But when the time came to make the move, he announced that he had changed his mind and would

stop where he was. Thereupon, Mrs. Manning was so annoyed that she took out a summons against him in the Whitechapel County Court. Thinking that he had perhaps put her to some trouble, O'Connor voluntarily offered three weeks' rent, and the summons was withdrawn. Mrs. Manning, however, had not really sustained any loss, for, during the interval, she had secured another tenant. This was William Massey, a medical student.

While she was crafty enough to hide it from him, Mrs. Manning nourished a bitter grudge against Patrick O'Connor. First of all, he had jilted her. This was bad enough. What, however, was still more unforgivable was that she had lost some money in a speculation that he advised. Accordingly, she determined to be "revenged" on him. He was to pay ; and he was to pay with that which he most valued.

(3)

Maria Manning set about her dreadful preparations with a cold-blooded callousness that can never have been equalled. As a preliminary, she got her husband (who was in her confidence) to buy a crowbar and shovel, and then to help her to dig a grave under the kitchen flagstones. Her next purchase was a sack of quicklime. When the shop assistant remarked on this, she declared that she wanted it "to destroy slugs."

With a view to remaining herself in the background as long as possible, Mrs. Manning hit on an ingenious scheme for securing the presence of her intended victim. This was to get her lodger, William Massey, to ask him to dinner as his guest. Massey, under circumstances on which an odd construction

FEMININE FRAILTY

might be put, agreed without demur, and despatched a cordial invitation, worded as follows :

DEAR O'CONNOR,—I shall be happy to see you to dine with me and my sister, as she is coming from Derbyshire to stop a few weeks with me. She will be most happy to be introduced to you. Dinner will be ready at half-past five o'clock. If you are engaged, drop me a line. Trusting you are quite well,

I am, dear O'Connor, yours truly,
WILLIAM MASSEY.

O'Connor, scenting another "conquest," and unaware that William Massey had no sister in London, swallowed the bait. When he arrived at the house, he asked for Massey and his sister. Mrs. Manning said they had not yet come in, and suggested that he should stop and talk to her. But O'Connor had other ideas. He wanted the dinner he had come to eat, and was so annoyed at the absence of his host that he refused to stay.

Directly he had gone, Mrs. Manning upbraided her spouse for not doing his part in helping her to lure him into the kitchen. If his subsequent "confession" is to be credited, she said to him, "You cur-hearted villain, you have spoiled my scheme. I wanted to cook his goose, and now I am certain he will never come here any more." Thereupon, so Manning declared, "I asked her what would become of her immortal soul if she committed such a wicked act."

Mrs. Manning, whose views on psychological problems were ahead of her period, was undisturbed by the question. "We have no soul," she informed him. "When we are dead, we are like a lump of clay. We shall not suffer hereafter if we kill that scoundrel."

M A R I A M A N N I N G

O'Connor had slipped through her fingers, but only for the time being. Mrs. Manning's next step was to get rid of William Massey, to whom she gave notice, on the grounds that she and her husband were leaving London. When he had gone to lodge somewhere else, she sent her intended victim another invitation, this time written by herself :

DEAR O'CONNOR,—I shall be happy to see you to dine with us this day at half-past five. I trust you are quite well.

Yours affectionately,
M A R I A M A N N I N G.

This had the desired effect, and, on the evening of August 9th, the guest duly presented himself. After he had been in the house a few minutes, his hostess made the odd proposition that he should go downstairs and wash his hands. When he protested that he had done so before starting, he was told that "a very particular young lady" was expected. Thereupon, and all unsuspectingly, he walked into the kitchen. While he stood with his back to her, Mrs. Manning took a pistol from her pocket, and shot him through the head. "I saw O'Connor," said her husband afterwards, "fall across the grave. He was moaning. As I never liked him very well, I battered in his skull with a chisel."

Although her main object was now accomplished, Mrs. Manning still had other business afoot. Leaving her husband in that grim kitchen, to solace himself with beer, and keep off inconvenient visitors, she hurried to O'Connor's address in the Mile End Road. She was so well known there that the landlady thought it quite natural that she should "wait for him" in his bedroom. Making the most of her opportunity, she unlocked his trunks and took from them a packet of securities,

consisting of bonds and shares, together with a few pounds in cash and a couple of watches. Having done this, she returned to Minver Place, and methodically proceeded with her dreadful preparations for disposing of the body and destroying the evidence of the crime. The first thing she did was to strip it naked and burn the clothes. As O'Connor was a tall man, she, helped by her husband, then doubled back the legs and secured them with a cord. Having done this, they sprinkled a gallon of vitriol over it, lowered it into the grave, and filled up the cavity with lime, afterwards shovelling in the earth and replacing the flagstones in position. Then, untroubled by either conscience or digestion, Mr. and Mrs. Manning sat down, as if they had not a care in the world, to a hearty meal of roast goose.

(4)

Patrick O'Connor was not the sort of individual who could disappear without some enquiry as to the cause being made. When he did not turn up to his work at the docks, a messenger was sent to his rooms. Miss Armes, the landlady, said that he had gone to dine on the previous Thursday with the Mannings, and suggested that they would know where he was to be found. Two of his friends, William Flynn and Pierce Walshe, called to ask for him at Minver Place. Mrs. Manning, however, declared that he had not been there. This made the enquirers so suspicious that, when two more days had elapsed, they went to the police.

Although they did not at the moment suspect any foul play, the police thought it would perhaps be as well if they made

some formal enquiries on the spot. But, when they got there, they were astonished to find the house shut up and empty, and every stick of furniture removed. Nor had the Mannings left any address behind them with the neighbours. This looked so curious that the callers felt uneasy. Yet, although they examined every nook and corner, there was no trace anywhere of Patrick O'Connor.

Constables Henry Barnes and James Burton were quite ordinary policemen ; and the modern Scotland Yard official would probably have laughed at them and their rough-and-ready methods of investigations. Still, these methods secured results. The first thing they noticed was that, while the rest of the house was dirty, the kitchen was scrupulously clean. The occupants, too, had even taken the trouble to scrub the floor. This fact struck the pair as so odd that they began to examine the flagstones. They were rewarded by finding that the cement joining two of them was much fresher than it ought to be. On lifting these flags, they found a mass of similarly soft cement. As no workmen would have done the job in such a clumsy fashion, they resolved to see what the cement covered. There was no necessity to dig far before they saw, lying huddled up in the cavity, the naked and decomposing corpse of what had once been Patrick O'Connor.

The remains of the murdered man presented a horrible spectacle. There was a bullet wound in the skull ; the head and face were battered out of recognition ; and much of the body was destroyed by the action of the quicklime that had been sprinkled over it. But identification was still possible, for a dentist positively declared that the false teeth in the mouth had been made by him for O'Connor.

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The inevitable slip. The murderers had thought of most things, but not of this one.

A hue and cry for the two Mannings (against whom a coroner's jury returned a verdict of wilful murder) followed immediately. But they had left no visible traces. Still, as they had gone off with their luggage, it was obvious that they must have gone off by cab. Since cabs were seldom hired in Bermondsey, the police had no difficulty in discovering that two cabs had been called to Minver Place. One had driven Mrs. Manning, first to London Bridge, and then to Euston, and the other had driven her husband to Waterloo. From these points the "fares" had disappeared. Still, Mrs. Manning's driver could give a little more information. She had, he said, left some boxes, labelled "Mrs. Smith, passenger to Paris," in the cloak-room at London Bridge.

The fugitives had secured a good start ; and the fact that they had disappeared separately increased the difficulty of tracking them. The newly organised detective force was on its mettle. But those entrusted with it handled the business in a fashion that redounded to their credit. The trail of Mrs. Manning was picked up first. As a preliminary step, the boxes left at London Bridge, and labelled "Mrs. Smith," were examined by Superintendent Haynes, who found in them a number of articles that had belonged to the unfortunate O'Connor, together with some linen that was identified as the property of Mrs. Manning. She was thus connected with "Mrs. Smith."

The telegraph wires sent messages flashing all over the country ; and full descriptions of the "wanted" couple, together with the numbers of the stolen bonds, were forwarded to every police-station throughout the provinces. A special

watch was also kept on the Channel ports, as it was felt that an attempt would be made to leave England. In fact, the authorities were so convinced that one would be made that the Admiral at Portsmouth dockyard was instructed to despatch a frigate, H.M.S. *Fire Queen*, in chase of an emigrant ship bound for America. After overhauling a Prussian man-of-war in error, the pursuers, under cover of night, caught up with the other vessel. When, in response to a peremptory signal, the captain replied that he had two passengers on board named Manning, he was ordered to produce them. Having done so, it was discovered that they were a couple of maiden ladies of blameless reputation. As they were also of American nationality, apologies were demanded and given.

(5)

The “passenger to Paris” labels, on the trunks left by Mrs. Manning at London Bridge Station, had merely been intended to throw the police off the scent. Where she had really gone to was Edinburgh. As soon as she arrived there, she took a bedroom in Leith Walk, calling herself “Mrs. Smith,” and announcing that she had come from Newcastle.

So far, Mrs. Manning had exhibited a diabolical skill in covering her traces. She now, however, embarked on the series of false steps that was to prove her undoing. With incredible carelessness, she offered some of the stolen securities to an Edinburgh firm. They were quite prepared to buy them, but, as a business precaution, they enquired her name and address. When she said that she was Mrs. Smith, and that her father was a Mr. Robertson, of Glasgow, her accent struck

the firm as so little suggestive of Glasgow or Scotland that making some excuse, they asked her to come back a couple of days later. They also mentioned their mysterious visitor's call to the Chief Constable, and hinted that he should "keep an eye" on her. He did better. He kept two.

The Edinburgh firm's next step was to telegraph to London, enquiring about the securities that had been offered them. As soon as they had got a reply, they went to the police ; and the police went to the alleged "Mrs. Smith." On being arrested her trunks were searched by Superintendent Moxey, who found in them, together with a volume of *Family Devotions for Every Day in the Year*, a packet of share certificates that had belonged to O'Connor. After this, having no doubt as to her identity (which Mrs. Manning did not trouble to deny), he brought her before a magistrate.

" This is a very serious charge, madam," said that official. " It is my duty to tell you that you are not required to make a statement at this juncture."

But Mrs. Manning, who was always fond of the sound of her own voice, insisted on making one.

" It is absolutely ridiculous to suggest that I murdered Mr. O'Connor," she declared. " He was the kindest friend I had in the world. If he had been murdered, it was done by that villain of a husband of mine, while I was out for a walk. I hope you gentlemen will catch him."

The magisterial proceedings in Edinburgh only lasted a few minutes ; and, on their conclusion, Mrs. Manning was escorted to London. As her arrest was known, an immense crowd assembled at Euston to see her arrive in custody. But while she was being hustled into a cab, she disappointed the

mob that swarmed round it by covering her face with a handkerchief.

The capture of Frederick Manning followed a few days later. Shortly before disappearing, he had disposed of some of the stolen bonds. With this money in his pocket, and a few pounds which he had raised by selling all his furniture, he then crossed from Southampton to Jersey. By a remarkable coincidence, one of the passengers on the steamer happened to be a young woman who lived next door to him. At the moment she had not heard of the murder. When, however, she read an account of it a couple of days later, she told the Jersey police that he must be somewhere on the island. After a vigorous search, he was discovered by them living in a cottage at St. Heliers, under the assumed name of Jennings, and professing to be the London representative of a gin-distiller.

Keeping him under observation, the local police telegraphed to London for a detective who could identify him. One was despatched for the purpose. On being confronted by this officer, Manning, addled with drink, and abject with terror, cut a pitiable figure. Before he was even charged, he insisted on making a "confession." In this he sought to throw the whole responsibility on his wife, declaring that, from start to finish, he had acted under her "influence."

What the precious "confession" amounted to was as follows :

"My wife said to me, 'That old villain O'Connor has been the cause of my losing much money. As I am a living woman, I mean to be revenged on him.' I said to her, 'Do, in the name of God, abandon all such wicked thoughts.' Her reply was, 'Now I shall begin to get things ready to cook his goose.' She then bought a shovel, and dug under the flagstones in the

kitchen. When O'Connor came to dinner with us that night, no food had been prepared, but the table was laid with dish-covers. While he was in the kitchen, washing his hands, I was upstairs in my bedroom. Presently I heard the discharge of a pistol, and my wife came to me and said, 'Thank God, I have finished him off at last. I think no more of what I have done than if I had shot a cat on the wall.' I went into the kitchen, and saw O'Connor lying across the grave; he was moaning. As I never cared very much for him, I battered in his skull with a chisel. My wife cut off his clothes, and we put the body in the grave, covered it with lime, and trod down the earth. My wife said she was sorry she had not read prayers over the body. This will show you what sort of a woman she is.

"After the murder, my wife went to O'Connor's lodgings, and took away his shares and bonds. On the Saturday she asked me to sell some of the shares. I said I could not do this, as it would be committing a forgery. Still, I borrowed £100 on them, and gave most of it to her. On the Monday she told me that two men had called to enquire for O'Connor while I was out. When I said they were sure to be police officers, she said, 'Pray, don't tell me that, or I shall faint.' We planned to go to New York, and I went to sell the furniture to a dealer. As soon as I came back, I found my wife had gone. I do not know where she is, but I hope the wretch has been captured."

Clearly, no love lost between the pair.

(6)

The trial of the Mannings took place on October 25th and 26th, 1849, at the Central Criminal Court, and was presided

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over by Chief Baron Pollock. Sitting with him were Mr. Justice Cresswell and Mr. Justice Maule. The Attorney-General, Sir John Jervis, conducted the prosecution ; and Frederick Manning was defended by Sergeant Wilkins, and Mrs. Manning by Sergeant Ballantine and Sergeant Parry. Altogether a strong team.

The trial was regarded with immense interest by the general public ; and, the moment the doors were opened, a surging mob attempted to secure places from which to watch the proceedings. Only a limited number, however, could get into the gallery, for admission tickets had been issued by the sheriffs, just as if the court were a theatre. Among those specially favoured, and permitted to sit on the bench, were the Austrian Ambassador, the Spanish Minister, the Secretary to the Prussian Legation, Bishop Wiseman, Lord Augustus FitzClarence, and the Marquis of Hertford ; while seats in the well were allotted to representative members of the worlds of art, literature, politics, and Society. But, even then, the accommodation was so taxed that, according to one account, “several gentlemen of the first distinction, and two or three ladies, were glad to be given chairs in the dock itself, immediately behind the prisoners, but separated from them by the Governor of Newgate and various officials.”

Mrs. Manning’s toilet in the dock was apparently chosen to impress the jury. Thus, it consisted of a black satin gown, a cap and ruffles of white lace, a plaid shawl, and a pair of primrose yellow gloves. Mr. Manning, for his part, did not aspire beyond a “respectable suit of black.” This was regarded by the public as a delicate tribute to the memory of O’Connor. “He struck us,” observes a reporter, “as altogether repulsive, being

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a bullet-headed, thick-necked individual, with a half effeminate expression. Also, he seemed nearly dead from terror." The attitude of his companion, however, was very different. "She walked into the dock with a firm, unfaltering step ; and, during the whole time that she stood there, her countenance did not betoken the least symptom of agitation or alarm."

Both the prisoners pleaded "not guilty" to the indictment charging them with the murder of Patrick O'Connor. Mrs. Manning also demanded, through her counsel, that, as a foreigner, she should be tried separately, and by a jury *de medietate linguae*. It was a nice point. The court, however, refused the application, declaring that, having married an Englishman, she was no longer an alien, and, consequently, that an all-British jury was quite good enough for her.

A fact that had puzzled the authorities was that, while O'Connor's skull showed a bullet wound, no pistol had been found. An explanation, however, was furnished by a pawn-broker. This individual said that, a few days after the discovery of the murder, the male prisoner had pledged one at his establishment ; and a marine store dealer in the New Cut was prepared to swear that he had sold him this identical weapon. As for that part played by Mrs. Manning, a gunsmith said that he had instructed her in loading and firing a pistol ; and it was also proved that she had accepted delivery of the quicklime and crowbar.

William Massey, the medical student who had lodged in Minver Place for three months, said that Frederick Manning had often asked him for information on anatomical subjects. A non-anatomical question, however, that had been put to him was "if a murderer went to heaven." In his, Mr. Massey's

opinion, this was not the probable destination of such people. Still, he could not say what it was. Nor could he explain the curious attitude he had observed all through the dreadful business, nor give any acceptable reason for not suspecting that something criminal was afoot and warning the authorities. Altogether, an unsatisfactory witness.

Evidence of the discovery and condition of the corpse was given by the police and doctors. The medical "experts," however, were not very reliable, for one of them positively declared that there was "no known test for human blood-stains." This astounding contention was unchallenged. Two of O'Connor's colleagues, David Graham and Pierce Walshe, said they had met him crossing London Bridge on the afternoon of August 9th, and that he had told them he was on his way to dine with Mrs. Manning. Three days later, when they called at Minver Place, to enquire for him, Mrs. Manning declared he had not kept the appointment. When they asked for her husband, she said he had gone to church. As this was a very unusual practice on his part, they felt suspicious.

Both Sergeant Wilkins and Sergeant Ballantine made strenuous efforts on behalf of their respective clients. Wilkins, who appeared for the male prisoner, had begun life as a clown in a circus; and his forensic methods were always a little suggestive of the sawdust. But they were the methods of the period, and went down with juries. He began by alluding to the reports of the case that had been printed in various Sunday papers, "conjuring the jury to treat this depraved Press with ignominy and honest English indignation." After this, he expounded his theory of the crime. "My hypothesis,"

he told the twelve men in the box, “is that the female prisoner premeditated, planned, and concocted the murder, and made her husband her dupe. It is lacerating and agonising for me,” he added, “to depict a husband criminating a woman, and that woman his wife, yet my sense of duty and love of justice leave me no other alternative.”

Sergeant Wilkins had abused the Press. Sergeant Ballantine abused Sergeant Wilkins. He roundly dubbed his rhetoric as “unnecessary and vulgar”; and, further, declared that the conduct of his learned friend “in thus attempting to exculpate Frederick Manning at the expense of Mrs. Manning—to blacken the character of a prisoner, and that prisoner a woman—was unparalleled in a Court of Justice.” He was prepared to grant that an “illicit connection” had existed between his client and O’Connor, but this “lubricious dalliance” did not, he argued, prove that she had murdered him. He even went so far as to describe her as “a woman of frail but kindly feelings.” As for the certificates found in her possession, he held it a reasonable assumption that, in view of their equivocal relationship, they had been given her by O’Connor. The “wages of sin,” in fact.

The Attorney-General, in his reply, made short work of these ingenious theories ; and the Chief Baron summed up dead against both prisoners. They were represented by different counsel, he pointed out, and each protested that the crime was the act of the other. The male prisoner had admitted being present when the victim was done to death ; and the female prisoner had possessed herself of the murdered man’s property, and left London under a false name. It was for the jury to decide if such conduct were consistent with her innocence,

and also if the murder could have been committed by one of the accused without the full knowledge and help of the other.

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A British jury will forgive a woman most things. There is, however, one thing which they will not forgive. This is maltreating a corpse. Mrs. Manning had maltreated that of O'Connor to a horrible extent, for, not only had she buried it in quicklime, but she had also poured vitriol over it. Thus, it was inevitable that, together with her husband, she should be found guilty.

When the verdict was delivered, the prisoners were asked if they wished to say anything before sentence was pronounced. Frederick Manning had nothing to say. His wife, however, had a great deal to say, and insisted on addressing the court.

"There is no justice nor fair treatment for a foreign subject in this country," she declared passionately. "I have had no proper protection from the judges, or from the prosecutor, or from my husband. I am wrongly condemned. My solicitors should have called witnesses to prove that the shares were bought with my own money. I have lots of letters from Mr. O'Connor to show his regard for me. I think, too, that, considering I am a woman and alone, and have had to fight against my husband's statements, as well as against the prosecution, and that even the judge himself is against me—well, I think that I am not being treated like a Christian, but like a wild beast of the forest. The judge and jury will have it on their consciences for giving a verdict against me. I am not

guilty. I have lived in respectable families, and can produce testimonials of character. If my villain of a husband, through jealousy and revenge, chose to murder poor Mr. O'Connor, I really don't see why I should be punished. That is all I have to say just now, except that I wish I could express myself better in English."

The court listened patiently to this harangue. But it was all to no purpose, and sentence of death was passed. This duty devolved upon Mr. Justice Cresswell.

Scarcely, however, had he begun, "George Frederick Manning and Maria Manning, you have been convicted of the crime of murder," when he was interrupted.

"I have not been convicted my lord," screamed Mrs. Manning furiously. "I will not stop here and let you say it. You ought all to be ashamed of yourselves!"

While the judge was continuing, she kept up a running commentary. Then, when the last solemn words, "to be hanged by the neck until you are dead, and may the Lord have mercy on your soul!" had been uttered, there was another scene, for Mrs. Manning clung to the ledge of the dock, and once more expressed her opinion.

"Base and shameful England!" she shouted at the top of her voice. "There is no justice in this country!"

(8)

From the Old Bailey dock the pair were removed to the condemned cells at Horsemonger Lane Gaol. As soon as she arrived there, Mrs. Manning, always full of resource, wrote two letters, asking for a respite. These were addressed to the

Queen and the Duchess of Sutherland. No replies were returned. What, however, were returned were the letters themselves. Still, if disappointed, Mrs. Manning was not depressed. On the contrary, she appeared rather proud of the notoriety accorded her, and conducted herself with immense dignity towards the prison officials.

Despite the fact that he was briefed by her, Sergeant Ballantine appears to have had no delusions about the lady. "Although she was my client," he remarks in his *Reminiscences*, "I suspect she was the power that really originated the deed of blood." Still, he did his best to get her another trial, with a mixed jury in the box. The court, however, ruled that, having become a British subject on her marriage, she had lost her privileges as an alien, and thus had been properly tried by an all-British jury.

"On being told by the Rev. Chaplain the result of her appeal, Mrs. Manning seemed much chagrined ; and, when exhorted to confess, she flatly refused to do so, emphatically declaring that the crime had been committed by her unfeeling spouse." The Established Church having failed, a Roman Catholic priest then tried his hand. But the result was no better, for "she would not listen, and was rather rough in her refusal." Nor would she see her husband.

"Tell him," she said to the governor, "that he has brought me here. He is a liar and a coward. Until he learns to tell the truth as to what happened, I do not want to see him."

Despite the strenuous efforts of the chaplain and a "benevolent lady visitor," to direct them to higher things, Mrs. Manning's last thoughts were concerned with purely mundane matters. Thus, we read, "on being told the exact date fixed for

her execution, she calmly set to work and made a new pair of drawers, expressly for the purpose of being hung in."

The Rev. Mr. Roe had better luck with the male prisoner, for Frederick Manning indulged in a veritable orgy of "repentance." At the chaplain's suggestion, he wrote several letters to his wife, begging her to "repent." They were all couched in the customary sanctimonious strain that marks the average epistle from the condemned cell; and were full of smug assurances that—despite his regrettable slip—he would join the unfortunate O'Connor in heaven.

A specimen letter was as follows :

I address you as a fellow sinner, and not as my wife. . . . We may already consider ourselves as cut off from the world. The consciousness of this truth does not, however, prevent me from expressing my earnest solicitude for the happiness of your soul, as well as for my own. I do therefore beseech and implore you to be truthful in all you utter, and that you may not be tempted to yield to any evil suggestion of the enemy of our souls' welfare, or to question for one instant that we shall shortly appear before our God in judgment. . . . I earnestly pray that you will look to God for the pardon you need (and of which I feel my own need also), through the merits of our crucified Redeemer.

Mrs. Manning responded to this unctuous rigmarole with some dignity and logic, for she pointed out that it was only her husband's statements that had condemned her. This happened to be true; and, had she been tried separately, it is doubtful if she could have been convicted, since such statements would not then have been accepted.

On the Sunday preceding the execution, Maria Manning and her husband attended a special service in the prison chapel.

It must have been a nerve-racking ordeal, for the Rev. Mr. Roe "delivered a very impressive sermon, in the course of which he made frequent and pointed reference to the unhappy criminals, who wept bitterly. The reverend gentleman also took occasion to desire the prayers of the congregation on behalf of the two convicts, their wretched brother and sister, who had but a few more hours to live."

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The day fixed for the double execution was Tuesday, November 13th, 1849. As was the savage custom at that period, it was to be carried out in public. All through the previous night an immense crowd, attracted by the promised spectacle that the morning would offer them, gathered in the vicinity of the prison. Catering to the evil passions that such scenes invariably let loose, the tenants of the houses opposite the scaffold did a roaring business in letting "seats to view." A place at a window commanded a couple of sovereigns ; and half a crown was the minimum price for a peep from a roof. Even the branches of the trees in the gardens had their occupants. But the great mass of would-be spectators had assembled immediately in front of the prison wall, pressing against the stout wooden barriers that prevented them coming too near. There they prepared to spend the long night, in ghoulish anticipation of what the next morning would bring. A mob composed of practically every section. The cream of Mayfair, and the scum of the New Cut. Smart young Guardsmen and contingents from the clubs ; medical students and costermongers ; shop assistants and navvies ; errand boys and clerks ; women

and children ; gutter-merchants selling “last dying speeches and confessions” ; pickpockets and prostitutes openly plying their trade ; people fighting, and people fainting ; everywhere drinking and gambling and debauchery ; devilled kidneys and jorums of punch in the houses and on the stands ; saveloys and beer in the booths under the flaring naphtha lamps ; the air hideous with ribald songs and blackguardly obscenities ; jeers and cat-calls without intermission. Altogether, the conduct of the mob suggested a Saturnalia. It formed the subject of a memorable letter in *The Times* from the pen of Charles Dickens :

A sight so inconceivably awful as the wickedness and levity of the immense crowd collected at the execution this morning could be imagined by no man, and presented by no heathen land under the sun. The horrors of the gibbet, and of the crime which brought the wretched murderers to it, faded in my mind before the atrocious bearing, looks, and language of the assembled spectators. When I came upon the scene at midnight, the shrillness of the cries and howls that were raised from time to time, denoting that they came from a concourse of boys and girls already assembled in the best places, made my blood run cold.

. . . When the day dawned, thieves, low prostitutes, ruffians, and vagabonds of every kind, flocked on to the ground, with every variety of offensive and foul behaviour. Fightings, faintings, whistlings, imitations of Punch, brutal jokes, tumultuous demonstrations of indecent delight, when swooning women were dragged out of the crowd by the police, with their dresses disordered, gave a new zest to the general entertainment.

. . . I am solemnly convinced that nothing that ingenuity could devise to be done in this city, in the same compass of time, could work such ruin as one public execution, and I stand astounded and appalled by the wickedness it exhibits.

I do not believe that any community can prosper where such a scene of horror and demoralisation as was enacted this morning outside Horsemonger Lane Gaol is presented at the very doors of good citizens, and is passed by, unknown or forgotten. And when, in our prayers and thanksgivings for the seasons, we are humbly expressing before God our desire to remove the moral evils of the land, I would ask your readers to consider whether it is not a time to think of this one, and to root it out.

But the public conscience is stirred slowly ; and, despite this spirited protest, public executions remained to blot the Statute Book and debauch spectators for another twenty years.

(10)

The morning of November 13th. The last one she would ever know. At a quarter-past eight Mrs. Manning, who was said to have slept soundly, was conducted to the chapel. There, for the first time since they had stood in the dock together, she spoke to her husband. "I trust," he remarked, "that you are not going to depart this life with animosity towards me." After the Sacrament had been administered, they were permitted to talk to one another for a few minutes.

"I hope we shall meet in heaven," said Manning unctuously, when Mr. Keene, the governor, announced that the interview must come to an end.

The two Mannings were to be "turned off" by Calcraft. A thoroughly experienced practitioner in all connected with his grisly business, he stepped forward and deftly adjusted the pinioning straps.

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Only in that moment did the woman's iron nerve fail her.

"Will it hurt me, Mr. Calcraft?" she faltered.

"Not a bit, my dear madam," was the brisk response. "That is, if you remember to keep quite still."

When the pinioning was completed, she had a last request to put.

"I shall be obliged," she said to the governor, "if you will be so good as to forbid anybody to take a cast of me for exhibition at Madame Tussaud's establishment."

"I will do my utmost to prevent it," was the response.

Comforted with this promise (which, by the way, was not fulfilled, for it was more or less inevitable that she should have a niche in that Valhalla of criminality, the Chamber of Horrors), she then offered the surgeon a handkerchief.

"Please cover my face," she said. "I do not want the public to stare at me."

With the passage of every moment, the hour of doom was drawing nearer. All being in readiness for the final act in the drama, the grim procession was assembled, each in the properly appointed place. First, Mr. Sheriff Abbott, with wand of office ; then Mr. Keene, the prison governor, and Mr. Moore, his deputy ; then the chaplain, reading the opening words of the burial service ; then, with turnkeys on either side of them, Frederick Manning, in a frock coat, and Maria Manning, in a black satin gown ; just behind them, Mr. Harris, the surgeon ; and, lastly, a trio of ghoulish figures hovering like ill-omened vultures in the rear, Calcraft and a couple of his assistants.

Eighty years ago, things at such times were done differently. No half a dozen steps from the condemned cell to the gallows drop. Instead, and with what suggests a refinement of cruelty,

MARIA MANNING

the Mannings were located in a part of the prison that required them to traverse a long corridor and mount a steep flight of stairs. At one spot, too, in a stone-flagged passage, they had to walk over quivering planks, beneath which their graves had already been dug.

The scaffold had been erected on the flat-topped tower above the prison entrance. While the twin nooses that dangled from the cross beam were adjusted, Frederick Manning, in a state of collapse, had to be held up by a couple of turnkeys. Maria Manning, however, stood there without a tremor.

In that last moment, the chaplain made a fresh effort to extract from her an admission of guilt.

"I have nothing to say," she declared firmly.

The prison bell tolled nine. At a nod from the governor, Calcraft, stepping aside, pulled back a lever. Instantly the trap-doors on which the doomed pair, trussed and helpless, had stood a moment earlier, gaped apart, and they fell crashing through them. As they disappeared into the void, the huge mob below set up a shuddering roar of mingled triumph and execration.

A black flag fluttered in the breeze. Patrick O'Connor was avenged.

LOLA MONTEZ



LOLA MONTEZ
As she appeared at Covent Garden

LOLA MONTEZ

(1)

SWEET a drag-net through the pages of the world's fiction, and little, for wealth of adventure and romance heaped upon romance, will be found in it to equal, and nothing to eclipse, the true story of Lola Montez.

But the true story of this remarkable woman is very difficult to disentangle ; and nearly all who have essayed to present it have done so in oddly contrasting versions. It is not that there is any lack of material. On the contrary, the amount that has been published about her in pamphlets and volumes and memoirs is embarrassing. Of this flood, much the best will be found in the carefully documented biography compiled by Edmund d'Auvergne.

The first thing to bear in mind is that Lola Montez was merely a *nom du théâtre*. She was christened Maria Dolores Eliza Rosanna, daughter of Edward Gilbert, a newly gazetted ensign of the 25th Foot, and her mother had been a Miss Oliver. There was good reason that the marriage of this couple took place when it did, as the baby was born in barracks at Limerick, in 1818, two months after the nuptial knot had been tied. In fact, the honeymoon was still in full swing when the regimental doctor and monthly nurse had to be summoned.

With filial devotion (or perhaps mere human weakness), Lola always declared that her father was a son of Sir Edward

and Lady Gilbert, and that he became an ensign at seventeen and a captain at twenty. The regimental records, however, are dumb on this subject ; and at no period do they advance him beyond the rank of subaltern. In her autobiography, too, she says that her mother (whom she describes as "an Oliver, of Castle Oliver, a descendant from the Spanish noble family of the Counts de Montalvo ") fled from a convent to marry him. A romantic touch, but requiring a liberal sprinkling of salt to make it acceptable without further evidence.

As a very small child, Lola (by which diminutive of Dolores she was always known) accompanied her parents to India. After a brief spell at Calcutta, Ensign Gilbert was ordered up-country to Dinapur. There he fell a victim to cholera, leaving his six-year-old daughter fatherless, and his young wife a widow, "to the care and protection of Mrs. General Brown."

"You can have but a faint conception," she says, writing years afterwards of this event, "of the responsibility of the charge of a handsome young European widow in India." Still, "Mrs. General Brown" did not have it long, for Mrs. Gilbert very soon re-married. Her second choice fell on a Captain Patrick Craigie, a close friend of her dead husband, and "a man of high intellectual attainments." He seems to have been a Dobbin-like person, solid and stolid. But he proved an admirable stepfather ; and when the time came for the little girl, who was rapidly becoming spoiled, to leave India, he had her sent to his relatives in Scotland. They lived at Montrose, and it was there that she was brought up during the next few years.

The Montrose household was a strict and dour one, with an atmosphere of chill Calvinism informing it. After the petting

she had received in India, the child was so miserable, and wrote such piteous letters that her mother and stepfather presently made a fresh arrangement for her future. As luck would have it, an Anglo-Indian friend of theirs, General Sir Jasper Nicolls, had just returned to England and settled down at Bath. Wanting a young girl to bring up with his own daughter, he readily accepted the guardianship of Lola Gilbert. Accordingly, she exchanged the dullness of Montrose for the gaieties of Bath and the companionship of Miss Fanny Nicolls.

After a little time, Sir Jasper, considering, like other military veterans, that his pension would go further in France than in England, took the two girls off to Paris. They enjoyed themselves there thoroughly. The General also found the cafés and boulevards and theatres very much to his taste. But the political atmosphere was unsettled just then ; and Sir Jasper had enough prescience to read the portents correctly. He sniffed revolution in the air ; and, more fortunate than hundreds of his compatriots, he managed to slip back to England with his family just in time to avoid being engulfed in the maelstrom of the Revolution of 1830 and all that followed in its train.

The two girls returned to Bath to be “finished”—that is, to be inducted in all the elegancies required of “young ladies of quality” in the days of William IV. The curriculum drawn up by their governess followed the approved pattern. They simpered and blushed ; did a little needlework ; practised duets on the spinet and harpsichord ; painted in water-colours ; wept over the early poems of Mrs. Hemans and Letitia Landon ; shuddered at the mention of Cobbett ; considered Byron “dreadfully daring” ; and experienced delightful thrills from the romances of young Mr. Harrison Ainsworth.

Still, they were not entirely cloistered, for, under careful escort, they attended "select" concerts in the Assembly Rooms, and occasional drums and routs.

(2)

During their long separation (which had now lasted ten years) Lola almost forgot that she had a mother. But Mrs. Craigie, in far-away India, remembered that she had a daughter and a daughter who was old enough to be married. She also felt that the girl's ripe beauty, of which glowing accounts had been sent out to her by Sir Jasper Nicolls, could be put to better purpose than being squandered on the young bucks of Bath, few of whom had a penny with which to bless themselves. Actuated, doubtless, by maternal anxiety, she looked round for a suitable bachelor in her own circle. There were plenty of applicants. The one among them on whom her ultimate choice fell was a certain Sir Abraham Lumley, a Calcutta judge. He was sixty and liverish. Still, he had amassed a fortune, and was prepared to make handsome settlements.

As those were the days when young girls did (in theory) what they were told, it did not occur to Mrs. Craigie that her daughter would object to marrying a man more than old enough to be her father, and whom she had never seen. But—perhaps the Bath air had got to her head, or else the curriculum of the "finishing-school" was at fault—Lola did object. Not only this, but, when her mother arrived in England and assembled her trousseau, she even called the Calcutta judge a "gouty old rascal." Neither tears nor arguments nor reproaches would alter her decision. She flatly refused to recline

on Abraham's elderly bosom. She much preferred that of somebody else. This was the dashing and whiskered Lieutenant Thomas James, a young officer on leave from India who had accompanied Mrs. Craigie to Bath.

What happened was only what might have been expected ; “in tears and despair, she appealed to him to save her from this detested marriage—a thing which he did most effectually by eloping with her the next day himself.”

Running away with a man was one thing ; getting married to him was another. It was also a difficult business, since Lola was still under age, and no clergyman would tie the knot until her mother's consent had been secured. After first refusing it, Mrs. Craigie, realising that her daughter was now seriously compromised, made the best of a bad job ; and in the summer of 1837 “Rosa Anna Gilbert, condition spinster” was wedded to “Thomas James, Lieutenant, 21st Bengal Native Infantry.” Thus the register of the parish church at Meath, where the ceremony was duly performed.

The couple had married in haste. They also repented in haste. As a matter of fact, the ink was scarcely dry on the certificate when the pair began to bicker. The trouble was money, or, rather, the want of it. The lieutenant had nothing beyond his scanty pay. This did not go very far. Still, it went as far as Dublin, where the bride was made much of by dashing young A.D.C.'s and the “Castle set,” from H.E. the Viceroy downwards. Under the circumstances, accordingly, it was perhaps just as well that on the expiration of his leave her husband was recalled to India and she accompanied him there.

So far as concerned its amenities for Europeans, the India of ninety years ago was very different from the India of to-day.

Still, since all things are comparative, Mrs. James found Calcutta "a gay and fashionable city," and Simla also proved to her liking. The Hon. Emily Eden (sister of Lord Auckland, the Governor-General) has the following impression of her :

Simla is much moved just now by the arrival of a Mrs. J. She has been talked of as a great beauty all the year, and that drives every other woman, with any pretensions in that line, quite distracted. . . . Mrs. J. is undoubtedly very pretty, and such a merry, unaffected girl. She is only seventeen now, and does not look so old ; and when one thinks that she is married to a junior lieutenant in the Indian Army, fifteen years older than herself, and that they have 160 rupees a month, and are to pass their whole lives in India, I do not wonder at Mrs. C.'s resentment at her having run away from school.

But Lola was not to enjoy the pleasures of Calcutta and Simla long, as the 21st were soon ordered off to Karnaul, in the Punjab. It was a dreary, fever-ridden cantonment ; and her husband, who appears to have developed into a sort of Rawdon Crawley, did not make things better by neglecting her, and giving himself up to gin-swilling, card-playing, and gambling. But worse was to follow, for presently, he found a siren in a Mrs. Lomer, the wife of a brother-officer. His intentions being strictly dishonourable, and the lady not being overburdened with scruples, he bolted with her to the Neilgherry Hills.

Bereft of a husband, Lola remembered that she still had a mother and a stepfather. Accordingly, she went off to visit them in Calcutta. The maternal reception was lukewarm. That of her stepfather, however, was kindly ; and when Mrs. Craigie declared that the best thing to do with her troublesome daughter would be to send her back to England, "large tears

rolled down his cheeks." But his sympathy was also practical, for he gave her a handsome cheque, and arranged that she should live with his relatives in Perthshire. Lola, however, had no intention of doing anything of the sort. A fling in London was much more to her fancy, and she determined to have it.

(3)

The vessel in which she embarked to England had a fair-sized passenger-list. Among those figuring on it happened to be a certain Captain Lennox, aide-de-camp to Lord Elphinstone, Governor of Madras. He did much to lighten the tedium of the long voyage. In fact, he did so much, where the attractive young grass-widow was concerned, that tongues began to wag. Some of them even wagged to such effect that repercussions of them echoed in far-away India, and eventually reached the ears of the philandering lieutenant. Considering himself the aggrieved party (and ignoring his own amorous dalliance with Mrs. Lomer), he instructed his solicitors to start divorce proceedings.

Lola, dodging her stepfather's brother ("a blue Scotch Calvinist"), who met the ship at Southampton, and happily ignorant of her husband's unamiable intentions, reached London during the winter of 1841. With reference to her arrival in England, a curious story appears in the diplomatic *Memoirs of Lord Malmesbury*:

I made her acquaintance by accident, as I was going up to London from Heron Court in the railway. The Consul at Southampton asked me to take charge of a Spanish lady, who had been recommended to his care, and who had just landed.

I consented to do this, and was introduced by him to a remarkably handsome person, who was in deep mourning, and who appeared to be in great distress. As we were alone in the carriage, she, of her own accord, informed me in bad English that she was the widow of Don Diego Leon, who had lately been shot by the Carlists after he was taken prisoner, and that she was going to London to sell some Spanish property that she possessed, and give lessons in singing, as she was very poor. On arriving in London, she took some lodgings, and came to my house to a little party which I gave, and sang some Spanish ballads. Her accent was foreign, and she had all the appearance of being what she pretended to be.

Lord Malmesbury must have been thinking of somebody else, or his memory (as often happens with diplomatic diarists) must have led him sadly astray. As a matter of fact, there is not a word of truth in this account. What really happened was that, on reaching London, Lola put up at an hotel in Covent Garden. Her *compagnon de voyage*, Captain Lennox, had the hospitality of the same roof. According to the evidence ferreted out by solicitors' clerks and prying chambermaids, he also had the hospitality of the same bedroom. The result was, when the Consistory Court assembled to hear the petition of James *v.* James, things looked very black. Perhaps it was because she realised this that the respondent did not appear; and, as was bound to happen, the decision was given against her.

As the Consistory Court decree could not be made absolute until a second petition had been presented to the House of Lords (a step which was never adopted), it merely had the effect of a divorce *a mensa et a thôro*—that is, a judicial separation. Lola, ignorant of legal jargon, probably considered her marriage well and truly dissolved. Neither husband nor paramour enlightened her on the subject. The former stopped

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in India, and the latter abandoned her. Thus she learned very early to discount masculine promises.

Mrs. James wasted no tears on either of the pair. She was much too busy earning a living. Being young (not yet twenty-four), attractive, and ambitious, she felt that the stage was the best market for her gifts. She had the good sense to put herself in the hands of a qualified instructress, Miss Fanny Kelly. When that lady told her that she was devoid of histrionic talent, she exhibited still more good sense by accepting the verdict. After all, there were other rôles besides Juliet. If she could not be an actress, she could at least be a ballerina.

(4)

The early-Victorian stage was wrapped in what would now be regarded as narrow-minded prejudices. One of these was a positive refusal on the part of managers and the public to consider the Divorce Court a natural stepping-stone to the theatre. On this account, the aspirant (thinking it advisable to avoid recognition) adopted the name of Lola Montez. Aware, too, that an admittedly English ballet dancer would have small prospect of success in London, she also adopted a Spanish nationality and a foreign accent. Thus equipped, she made her début at Her Majesty's Theatre, in the summer of 1843.

Everything promised well. The house was thronged with a large and distinguished audience, all eager to witness Mr. Manager Lumley's new attraction. "Donna Lola Montez, *première danseuse* from the Teatro Real, Seville." Royalty sat in the boxes, and a swarm of dukes and duchesses and "polite

fashionables" filled the stalls and circle. But, as luck would have it, Lord Ranelagh and a select party of Corinthians from Almack's, had also elected to be present that night. His lordship, it seems, had endeavoured to fill the vacancy caused by the defection of Captain Lennox, and his offer had been repulsed. He nourished resentment on this account; and, when she tripped on to the stage, he passed the word to his sycophants that the newcomer should be vigorously kissed. The next day he went a step further, and spread a crop of malicious stories that redounded to her discredit, declaring her, among other things, to be an "impostor."

"She's not Donna Lola at all," he informed his friends. "She's Betty James. That's who she is. She hasn't come from Seville, but from the Divorce Court. Lumley is swindling us!"

The attitude of Lord Ranelagh (an elderly *roué*, who was afterwards to figure in the unsavoury "Madam Rachel" case) was a cowardly one. Yet it proved effective, for the time-serving Lumley cancelled Lola's engagement on the grounds of "failure to attract." The critics, however, did not support this view. Thus, the *Era* led off with the following:

Donna Lola enchanted everyone. We never remember seeing the habitués, both young and old, taken by more agreeable surprise than this bewitching lady excited. She was rapturously encored, and the stage strewn with bouquets. We hope soon to see her again, and in that wish we can confidently add that the whole house participates.

Nor was the *Morning Herald* any less enthusiastic:

The commanding form of Donna Lola Montez is revealed in

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all its glory. And a lovely picture it is to contemplate. There is before you the perfection of Spanish beauty—the tall handsome person, the full lustrous eye, the joyous animated face, and the intensely raven hair. . . . The young lady came and saw and conquered. Many flowers were shot at her by way of compliment at the termination of her performance.

But all to no purpose. Lord Ranelagh and his satellites had “influence,” and Lola Montez had none. In an attempt to rehabilitate herself with the public, she wrote an indignant (and, it must be admitted, not entirely truthful) letter to the Press :

I have been cruelly annoyed by reports that I am not really the person I pretend to be, but that I have long been known in London as a disreputable character. There is not one word of truth in such a statement. I am a native of Seville, and, until 14th of April last, when I landed in England, I never set foot in this country, and I never saw London before in my life. . . . My lawyer has received instructions to proceed against all the parties who have calumniated me.

But second thoughts proved best ; and, very wisely for herself, no proceedings were taken against anyone. Still, and to put as good an appearance as possible on the set-back, the victim of it announced that the cause of her dismissal was one of salary. Lumley, the manager, did not consider it necessary to contradict her.

(5)

After this rebuff, Lola, determined that her *première* should not also be her *dernière*, resolved to try her luck elsewhere, and set off on tour of various foreign capitals. This Odyssey, which lasted five years, started badly, for at Brussels, instead

of dancing in the Opera House, she was reduced to singing in the streets and to pawning her clothes. With the money thus raised, and the help of a German admirer, she next went to Warsaw. There she did secure an engagement. The Poles, crushed under the iron heel of Russia, took her to their hearts. Her flashing personality exercised a spell that none could resist ; "and Prince Paskevich, the Viceroy, fell most furiously and disgracefully in love with her." He was sixty and decrepit—and also a husband and a father—but this did not prevent him (through the medium of the theatre's director) attempting to purchase her compliance. It was a princely gift that he offered—nothing less than "a splendid country estate, and diamonds besides."

Lola's refusal of his overtures was taken in bad part ; and the angry and lustful Paskevich met it by denouncing her as a spy, and ordering her expulsion from Poland. But for the prompt action of the French consul in Warsaw, who was chivalrous enough to come to the rescue by claiming her as a French subject, she would probably have been lodged in prison. "But," we read, "in the midst of all the excitement, the little dancing girl who had kicked up all the muss (*sic*) slipped off to Russia, where she had been invited personally by the Emperor himself, whom she had already met in Berlin at the court of his father-in-law, Frederick William of Prussia." This Emperor was Nicolas, and with him she soon established an *entente* that brought down upon her a prodigal shower of diamonds and roubles.

After St. Petersburg, another visit to Berlin. There, according to her own account, Lola was "almost married" to Prince Schulkoski. At any rate, the pair were on terms that suggested

a very intimate bond. When, however, she discovered that the prince's heart was sufficiently capacious to have a niche in it for somebody else, Lola, who never brooked a rival, abruptly severed the connection. Another "adventure" was awaiting her at Dresden, with no less a personality than Franz Liszt himself. For her sake the maestro left the Comtesse d'Agoult, the mother of his illegitimate children, after an unofficial union that had lasted since 1834. The Comtesse, pining neglected in her villa, sent the musician a reproachful letter. It was unanswered.

Meanwhile, the *Odyssey* was rapidly spreading across Europe. The Brussels, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Berlin, and Dresden visits were followed by one to Paris. There, in March 1844, Lola Montez made her début at the Opera House. It was not a successful one ; and, while they admired her beauty, the critics considered her dancing below the standard that should be offered in the capital. When some of them said as much, she pulled off her slippers and threw them among the audience.

Still, if she could not succeed in one direction, she could in another. As before, she set men's hearts aflame. Her first conquest was Alexandre Dumas ; her second was Dujarier, a prominent journalist and contributor to *La Presse*. He must have made an appeal to her, since, departing from her established custom in such cases, Lola actually decided to marry him. But, before the wedding bells could ring out, Dujarier, who was of a quarrelsome disposition, fell in an "affair of honour," engineered in a café brawl. There was a suggestion of foul play, and his antagonist, Jean Baptiste de Beauvallon, was arrested and charged with murder. His plea that Dujarier's

death was the result of a duel was met by the argument that, having once, as a young man, been found guilty of a petty theft, he was not entitled to any consideration. "A French jury," said the examining magistrate, "can only tolerate duels among men of unblemished honour."

The trial that followed was held at Rouen, and attracted immense public interest all over France. Lola, who was never averse to publicity, demanded to be examined. Her testimony was valueless, but it created more sensation than that of Dumas. "I was a better shot than poor Dujarier," she said, "and if de Beauvallon had wanted satisfaction I would have gone out with him myself." It was only the forensic skill of M. Berryer that secured de Beauvallon's acquittal. But the arm of the law was strong, for, together with one of his seconds, he was subsequently re-arrested and convicted of perjury.

(6)

Lola Montez mourned Dujarier sincerely. Still, her heart was not broken. She left France with, as she informed Albert Vandam, the deliberate intention of "hooking a prince." As Germany had thirty-six of them within its borders, she went there first. But, finding that they were not to be "hooked" at sight, she altered her plans and moved on to Bavaria. A monarch was better game than a prince ; and the capital held a king. This was Ludwig I, then a man of sixty, and, if rumour were to be credited, of a susceptible disposition. For once, rumour was to be credited ; and Lola came and saw and conquered.

An equerry, on whom she smiled, asked His Majesty to see her.

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“Am I to look at every dancing woman who comes to Munich and wants an engagement at the Hof Theatre?” peevishly enquired his master, who had already inspected a round dozen such candidates, with results disappointing to himself.

“Your pardon, sire, but this one is well worth seeing,” was the response.

Permission being grudgingly given, the suppliant for Royal patronage was ushered into his presence. Ludwig went down before her without a struggle.

“I am bewitched,” he said.

He spoke a true word. The sheer magic of Lola Montez enslaved him utterly. In a week he introduced her to his Cabinet and his Corps Diplomatique as “my best friend”; in a month she could twist him round her little finger. Ludwig was “hooked,” and very firmly. He even wrote poems to his charmer. Some of them have been preserved. Here are a couple of specimens :

And though thou mightest by all be forsaken,
I will never abandon thee:
For ever will I preserve for thee
Constancy and true German faith !

Whether near or far off, thou art mine,
And the love which with its lustre glorifies
Is ever renewed, and will last for ever.
For evermore our faith will prove itself true !

Poor stuff, but, none the less, inspired by a consuming flame. Events in Munich proceeded apace. From poetry to patronage. Before the royal troubadour’s astonished subjects could gather what was happening in their midst, this “Scarlet

Woman," as they called her among themselves, had been granted Bavarian nationality ; created Baroness von Rosenthal, Countess von Landsfeld, and Canoness of the Order of St. Thérèse ; and provided (at the taxpayers' expense) with a villa and an annual sum of 20,000 florins. Not only this, but her portrait was hung in the "Gallery of Beauties" at the Palace, where the Wittelsbach Lovelace was accustomed to retire every evening to gaze upon it.

A French authority is responsible for an odd picture of Lola's régime in Bavaria at this period :

"Her palace was filled with courtesans. To the shame of the aristocracy and of the arts, one found at the feet of this beautiful Fair Impure a throng of princes, illustrious personages, writers, and painters."

The Cabinet could stand a good deal. Still, there were limits to what they would accept. This was one of them. Accordingly, taking counsel together, they presented a decorous (but long winded) protest, drawn up by Karl von Abel, Minister of Public Worship and Education, and signed by three of his colleagues. In abridged form, it ran as follows :

Munich,

February 11th, 1847.

SIRE,—There are circumstances in which men invested with the inappreciable confidence of their sovereign, and charged with the direction of affairs, are called upon, either to renounce their most sacred duties, or to expose themselves at the bidding of their consciences to the risk of incurring the displeasure of their beloved Monarch. This is the sad necessity to which your Ministers find themselves reduced by the Royal determination to grant to Señora Lola Montez letters of naturalisation. . . . National feeling is wounded ; Bavaria believes itself

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to be governed by a foreign woman, whose reputation is branded in public opinion. . . . The statement, which the undersigned, whose hearts are torn with anguish, venture to place before Your Majesty is not the product of a terrified imagination, but of observations which each has made within the circle of his attributions during several months. We beg you to listen to our humble prayer, and not to suppose that it is dictated by any desire to thwart your Royal will. It is directed only against that state of things which threatens to destroy the fair fame, power, and future happiness of a beloved King.

Ludwig's gesture was Napoleonic. He dismissed the Cabinet, and appointed a fresh one which his inamorata selected for him. But she never could judge men, and she selected it badly. Rome pulled one way, and Austria another. Between them, they were too strong ; and, to stave off a threatened revolution, the man who had sworn to cherish Lola Montez "for ever" signed a decree expelling her from the kingdom. His pusillanimity, however, did not do him much good, for he himself had to abdicate.

"My kingdom for my Lola !" he had said.

He lost both.

Lola blamed the Jesuits more than the Bavarians for this *volte face*. Hospitality was given by *The Times* to an indignant letter from her on the subject :

I had not been here a week before I discovered that there was a plot existing in the town to get me out of it, and that the party was the Jesuit party. Of course you are aware that Bavaria has long been their stronghold, and Munich their headquarters. This naturally, to a person brought up and instructed from her earliest youth to detest this party (I think you will say justly), irritated me not a little.

When they saw that I was not likely to leave them, they

commenced on another attack, and tried what bribery would do, and actually offered me 50,000 fcs. yearly if I would quit Bavaria and promise never to return. This, as you may imagine, opened my eyes, and, as I indignantly refused their offer, they have not since then left a stone unturned to get rid of me.

But the “Fair Impure” had gone too far. The Munich mob threatened personal violence. She could take a hint as well as anybody, especially when stones were pitched through her windows. Disguised as a boy (a more difficult task for a young woman in those days than now), she slipped across the border and found sanctuary, first in Italy, and then in Switzerland. Her travelling companion is said to have been a certain M. Auguste Papon, who afterwards got into trouble in Paris for masquerading as a bogus priest and swindling. However, she soon took his measure, since she shed him at Berne, where an attaché of the British Legation is credited with filling the vacancy.

(7)

The spring of 1848 saw the wanderer in London. As she had now become a “public character,” theatrical managers were clamouring for her; and she was engaged to appear at Covent Garden in a sensational melodrama, *Lola Montez, or the Countess of an Hour*. It did not last much longer, as the Lord Chamberlain, feeling that it lampooned foreign royalties, stepped in and cancelled the licence.

Still, always ready to help others out of a difficulty, Lola did appear at Covent Garden on the occasion of the benefit of Edward Fitzball, the retiring manager.

“When I mentioned terms,” he says, “she refused to hear me, and, in fact, intended to, and did, dance for me for

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nothing. When the announcement appeared, everybody was astonished, and was calculating the enormous sum I had consented to give for the attraction. And a great attraction it proved. The theatre was crammed. Lola Montez arrived in the evening in a splendid carriage, accompanied by her maid, and, without the slightest affectation, entered the dressing-room prepared for her reception.

“... I have seen sylphs appear, and female forms of the most dazzling beauty, in ballets and fairy dreams, but the most dazzling and perfect form I ever did gaze upon was Lola Montez, in her splendid white and gold attire studded with diamonds. . . . At the conclusion of her performance, after a rapturous and universal call, when I advanced with delighted thanks, again holding up her hand in graceful remonstrance, she refused to hear me.”

As the old stories, declaring her name and nationality to be assumed were repeated, she also sent a circular letter to the London Press :

SIR,—In consequence of the numerous reports circulated in various papers regarding myself, and family, utterly devoid of foundation or truth, I beg of you, through the medium of your widely-circulated journal, to insert the following :

I was born at Seville in the year 1823. My father was a Spanish officer in the service of Don Carlos ; my mother, a lady of Irish extraction, born at the Havannah, and married for the second time to an Irish gentleman, which, I suppose, is the cause of my being called Irish, and sometimes English, “Betsy Watson,” “Mrs. James,” etc.

I beg leave to say that my name is Maria Dolores Porris Montez, and I never have changed that name.

As for my theatrical qualifications, I never had the presumption to think that I had any. Circumstances obliged me to

FEMININE FRAILTY

adopt the stage as a profession, which profession I have now renounced for ever, having become a naturalised Bavarian, and intending in future making Munich my residence.

Trusting that you will give this insertion, I have the honour to remain, sir,

Your obedient servant,
LOLA MONTEZ.

Munich,

March 31st, 1847.

The kindest construction to put on this rigmarole is that she had said it so often that she herself had at last come to believe it.

During this visit to London, Lola was living in Half-Moon Street, just off Piccadilly, where she held receptions, attended by, among others, Lord Brougham and George Augustus Sala. The latter, in his memoirs, has a characteristically inaccurate reference to her.

About this time I made the acquaintance, at a little cigar shop, of an extremely handsome lady, originally the wife of a solicitor, but who had been known in London and Paris as a ballet-dancer under the name of Lola Montez. When I knew her, she had just escaped from Munich, where she had been too notorious as Countess of Landsfeld. She had obtained for a time complete mastery over old King Ludwig of Bavaria ; and something like a revolution had been necessary to induce her to quit the Bavarian capital.

Some time after her return to England, she married a gentleman who was a son of a Proctor in Doctors' Commons ; but some legal difficulty arose in connection with her having another spouse alive, who had been a lieutenant in the Indian Army. After these difficulties had been settled, Lola Montez Landsfeld faded away, so far as England was concerned, into the Infinities.

This was where Sala's memory had also gone, when he

delivered himself of this passage. At any rate, it was very much at fault.

Among the more frequent visitors to Lola's *pied à terre* in London was a young Cornet of the Household Cavalry. This was Mr. George Heald, a youth with wealth, and embryo whiskers. He was head over ears in love with the Countess, and begged her to accept his heart and hand and fortune. The problem confronting the recipient of this offer was, cash or coronet? She could not have both, since marriage would mean giving up her "title." It was what she did give up; and in the summer of 1849 she married the dashing Cornet of Horse at St. George's, Hanover Square. There was a disparity of ages, as well as of position, for the bridegroom was just twenty, and the bride was nearly thirty-two.

When a woman is being married, she cannot be expected to remember everything. Lola Montez (or Mrs. George Heald, as she had now become) forgot something rather important. This was a similar ceremony that had taken place twelve years earlier in Ireland. Perhaps, however, she honestly imagined that the Lieutenant James who had first won her heart was dead, or else that a decree absolute had been pronounced in her divorce. But, as it happened, James was not dead; and the divorce had not been made absolute. Hence, this second ceremony through which she had just gone was invalid.

Where Cornet Heald was concerned, he was far too much in love to care if Lola had a dozen spouses alive. His aunt and guardian, however, a certain Miss Susanna Heald, took a very different view of the situation. She had always objected to the marriage; and now she saw her chance of upsetting it.

Accordingly, she went to the police ; and the police, on hearing what she had to tell them, went to No. 27 Half-Moon Street with a warrant for Lola's arrest on a charge of bigamy.

Instead of going into hysterics or swooning, Lola took it very coolly. When Inspector Whall and Sergeant Gray explained their visit, and asked her to put on her bonnet and accompany them in a cab, together with Mr. Heald, she advanced no objection.

"Of course this is all nonsense," she said, "because I was divorced by Act of Parliament. As for Captain James, I don't know if he is alive or dead, and I don't care. It wasn't a legal marriage, because I gave a wrong name. My friend, Lord Brougham, was present when my divorce was granted."

The case was heard at Marlborough Street police-court. Of the demeanour of the couple, when examined there by the magistrate, an interesting account is given by a reporter :

The lady appeared quite unembarrassed, and smiled several times as she made remarks to her husband. She was dressed in black silk, with close-fitting black velvet jacket, trimmed with blue, and a white straw bonnet and blue veil. Her reputed husband, Mr. Heald, is a tall young man, of juvenile figure and aspect, with straight hair, and downy mustachios and whiskers. The nose being turned up gives him an air of great simplicity. During the whole proceedings, he sat with the Countess's hand clasped in both of his own, occasionally giving it a fervent squeeze, and, at particular portions of the evidence, whispering to her with the fondest air, and pressing her hand to his lips with juvenile warmth."

Mr. Bodkin, who represented the defendant, was full of righteous anger, and protested that she "had been dragged to the station-house on a charge that was perfectly unparalleled

in all his experience.” He also hinted that the motives inspiring the prosecutrix were not creditable to her. Thereupon, Mr. Harding, for the other side, declared with equal warmth that their purity could not be impugned. “My application,” he said, “is that the lady at the bar be remanded until such a time as we can get the proper witnesses from India.”

To the disappointment of the public, who had hoped for revelations of “high life,” the proceedings did not last long; and the magistrate, accepting the assurance of a War Office clerk that Thomas James (now a captain) was still alive and serving in India, admitted Lola to bail in “a sum of £2,000 for her re-appearance at future day.”

Under the influence of either the bright eyes of Lola Montez or the well-filled cash-bags of Cornet Heald, the police did not think it necessary to adopt any active measures to ensure this re-appearance. Without the smallest difficulty, the couple left England and went to Spain. There, if de Mirecourt is to be believed (as a matter of fact, he is not to be believed), Lola added maternity to her other charms, and, after a suitable interval, presented her new spouse with “two lovely boys.” Yet, despite these pledges of affection, the hasty (and bigamous) marriage was interrupted by quarrels. A clash of temperament, perhaps, but the pair very soon separated. When, in the following year, the Cornet (whose Colonel seems to have granted him extended leave of absence from his military duties) met his death by drowning, the widow was not inconsolable.

This happened in 1851. The Countess of Landsfeld (as she once more called herself), being desirous of avoiding another compulsory visit to Marlborough Street, went to New York,

to fulfil a theatrical engagement. Of her début there, in a drama entitled *The Tyrolean*, we get this account :

A sensational *première* at the Old Broadway occurred December 29th, 1851, when a woman whose escapades for years had been the subject of scandal at tea-tables all over the world made her first appearance before the American public. This was Lola Montez, notorious, rather than famous, as the actress who had ruled a kingdom.

But whatever she could do elsewhere, she could not rule New York. In the jargon of the stage, Lola was a "flop," and the piece was promptly withdrawn. Always full of resource, she soon discovered a fresh method of attracting a coy public. This was to allow anybody, on paying a dollar, to have the privilege of attending a "reception," talking to her for five minutes and shaking her hand. Since the tariff was so moderate, such a large number of people clamoured for this privilege that the gaps in her depleted exchequer were soon filled up again. Then followed visits to other towns, where she met with similar success. If Hollywood had then existed, she would probably have gone there as well, and have become a star of the first magnitude in the cinema world. Still, she did go to California, where she toured through the mining-camps, "dressed ostentatiously in complete masculine attire, with French unmentionables, and natty polished boots and spurs."

This picturesque wardrobe, plus her abundant vitality, touched a chord in the heart of Mr. Patrick Hull, editor of the *San Francisco Whig*; and Lola, responding to it, entered the condition of wedlock for the third time. But she did not remain Mrs. Patrick Hull very long, as, while the honeymoon

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was still in full swing, she left her editorial spouse and established "contact" with a German, one Herr Adler. On his death from a shooting accident (a somewhat common occurrence in the Wild West at that period), Lola felt that she had been long enough in America.

(8)

It was to Australia that the *wanderlust* next took her, and in the spring of 1855 she reached Sydney. As her name and fame had gone before her, there was a large and curious public to witness her début in a blood-and-thunder drama called *Lola Montez in Bavaria*. Colonial opinion was hostile to her costume (or the lack of it) when she danced ; and, at one town where she was billed, somebody with an ultra-developed modesty complex asked the magistrates to stop the "exhibition." The Bench, however, declined to interfere. Another self-appointed guardian of "public morals" was a Ballarat editor. When he used his columns to print in them a long article reflecting on her private character, Lola, feeling that this was going beyond legitimate criticism, took a horsewhip and laid it across him with right good will. The result, as may be imagined, was that the backwoodsmen and diggers flocked to see her in larger numbers than ever.

The Australian tour ended with a "farewell performance" at Melbourne, for the benefit of the wounded at Sebastopol. On leaving the Antipodes, Lola, to whom a long sea voyage was nothing, took a passage to France. But the visit was a short one ; and, after an amorous dalliance with an actor at St. Jean de Luz ("eight days of married life" is her terse description

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of the episode), she again crossed the Atlantic. This time her repertoire consisted of *The Eton Boy*, *The Follies of a Night*, and the inevitable *Lola Montez in Bavaria*.

On her re-appearance among them, the “star” was “written-up” in lyrical fashion by the New York journalists :

Lola Montez owes less of her strange powers of fascination and world-wide celebrity to her powers as an *artiste* than to the extraordinary possession of mind and brilliancy with which heaven has endowed her. At one moment, ruling a kingdom through an imbecile monarch, and the next, the wife of a young and dashing English lord. . . . To say that she is a remarkable woman is not enough. Had she been born in some less Puritanic or civilised sphere of society than the present one, she might have adorned history and secured world-wide renown. Her person and bearing are unmistakably aristocratic ; and her performance upon the stage, though not of the highest order as an *artiste*, is yet far above mediocrity. . . . In her visit to our public schools a few days since, Lola surprised and delighted the pupils of the Latin School by addressing them in that tongue with perfect facility.

Who was the “young and dashing English lord” whom the American Press-agent credits her with having married ? It would be interesting to have his name.

The financial results of this tour proved a disappointment, and Lola had to think of another method of focussing public attention. She soon found one. Following the example of popular actresses of to-day, she let the outside world into her own toilet secrets, and gave them precise details of the adventurous causes responsible for her glossy hair, pearly teeth, and sylph-like figure, etc. All this information was offered in a little pamphlet, *The Arts of Beauty*, by Lola Montez, Countess of Landsfeld. Still, although her name appears as the author, it

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is unlikely that she really wrote a line of any of the chapters. With their cultured excerpts from the classics, choice poetical quotations, and numerous references to Aristotle and Petrarch, and to Shakespeare and Madame de Stael, the origin of them suggests Grub Street.

Among the chapter headings of this enlightening work were "How to Acquire a Bright and Smooth Skin"; "Paint and Powder"; "Habits which Destroy the Complexion"; and "Blemishes to Beauty." In one paragraph a note of warning was struck, which in itself was well worth the modest cost of the entire pamphlet :

"If dissipation, late hours, and immoderation have once checked the fair vessel of feminine charms, it is not in the power of Esculapius himself to right the shattered barque, and make it ride the sea in gallant trim again."

From authorship (alleged) Lola Montez wandered into a fresh field. This, to which she was introduced by a set of charlatans, was Spiritualism. Like Joan of Arc, she announced that she heard "Voices," and that they required her to abandon the stage for the lecture-hall. The "Voices" appear to have been very insistent, as, within a month of coming to this new decision, she delivered her first address in a Broadway conventicle. It was well received, although a callous reporter headed his account, "A Desperado in Dimity." Her range was a wide one ; and included "Beautiful Women"; "Heroines of History" (with Mrs. Bloomer as an outstanding example); "Wits and Women of Paris"; and "Romanism." This last effort was full of sly digs at the Jesuits ; and the strong plank in her platform was "The Protestant Principle," which, she declared, "has given the world the four greatest facts of

modern times—steamboats, railways, telegraphs, and the American Republic."

A beautiful woman who could stand up and say this sort of thing in public was simply bound to be a success ; and, when next she appeared there, the Broadway conventicle had to be enlarged, to accommodate the crowd clamouring for admission.

(9)

In moments of stress some women take to the bottle ; others to the Bible. With Lola Montez, it was a case of from bunkum to Boanerges. Dropping Spiritualism by the board, she next "took up" Methodism. That she threw herself into this fresh activity with characteristic fervour is revealed from various entries in her diary for September 1859 :

To-morrow is Sunday, and I shall go to the poor little humble chapel, and there I will mingle my prayers with the devout pastor, and with the good and true. There is no pomp or ceremony among these. All is simple. No fine dresses, nor worldly display, but the honest Methodist breathes forth a sincere prayer, and I shall feel much unity of soul.

From the next passage it would appear that she had suddenly developed what psycho-analysts call an inferiority complex :

Lord, Thy mercies are great to me. Oh ! how little are they deserved, filthy worm that I am. Oh that the Holy Spirit may fill my soul with prayer ! Let me put my undivided trust in my Saviour ; and let my rugged, lonely path (unseen by all) be radiant with light.

When she was unburdening herself in this fashion, Lola had left America for England, with the object of there raising

funds to advance the cause of Methodism, to which she had now pledged herself. With this end in view, she undertook a series of lectures. After a preliminary trip in the provinces (where, as a public attraction, she was very little less successful than Barnum, who was then touring the country), she reached London and appeared at the St. James's Hall. Her programme there was the one she had already delivered in America, but specially adapted for British consumption. Thus, her types of "Beautiful Women" and "Heroines of History" ignored Mrs. Bloomer, but included the Duchess of Sutherland, Lady Blessington, and Lady Seymour, with a somewhat half-hearted reference to the Duchess of Wellington.

The public, remembering the fair lecturer's "past," went to listen more out of curiosity than anything else. Still, they did listen, and in considerable numbers.

If [says the *Era*] any amongst the full and fashionable auditory that attended her first appearance imagined, with a lively recollection of certain scandalous chronicles, that they were about to behold a formidable-looking woman of Amazonian audacity, and palpably strong-wristed as well as strong-minded, their disappointment must have been grievous. . . . The lecture might have been a newspaper article, the first chapter of a book of travels, or the speech of a long-winded American Ambassador at a Mansion House dinner. All was exceedingly decorous and diplomatic, slightly gilded here and there with those commonplace laudations that stir a British public into the utterance of patriotic plaudits. A more inoffensive entertainment could hardly be imagined.

There is a theory that, during this visit to England, Lola Montez (who had developed a passion for tabernacles) came under the influence of Charles Spurgeon. That, like a modern

Pelagia, she certainly came under the influence of some very pronounced evangelical sect is clear from a passage in her diary :

It is good to write down every day what have been our thoughts and actions during the twenty-four hours.

... How many years of my life have been sacrificed to Satan, and my own love of sin ! What have I not been guilty of, either in thought or deed, during these years of misery and wretchedness !

Oh, I dare not think of the past. What have I not been ! I only lived for my own passions ; and what is there of good even in the best natural human beings ?

The “conversion” of Lola Montez was no flash in the pan. It was deep and sincere and lasting. In the winter of 1860, she definitely renounced the stage and all its works, and went back to America. Her position was then a sad one, for she arrived in New York bereft of her beauty, cast off by her old associates, threatened with poverty, and stricken with illness. One day, however, she met a woman who had been a companion of her girlhood, long years before in Montrose, and was now the wife of a prosperous citizen. Warm hearted and sympathetic, she proved a friend in need, and took Lola into her house. She also rekindled and fed the religious fervour that had begun to blaze just a trifle less fiercely ; and, under her guidance, Lola spent long hours in “rescue work” among the women outcasts of the city. Such leisure as remained was given up to “steadily, calmly, hopefully preparing for death, having full persuasion that consumption had sapped the pillars of her life, and that she was soon to make her final exit.”

The end was already very near. The illness that had fastened

upon Lola Montez developed into paralysis. Her shattered and enfeebled frame was beyond the skill of the doctors and clergymen summoned to her bed. On a wintry morning in January 1861 she turned her face to the wall and uttered her last breath. In the simple inscription of her tombstone, "Mrs. Eliza Gilbert, born 1818, died 1861," few would have recognised the Lola Montez who had flashed in such meteor fashion across three continents.

(10)

If Lola Montez were misrepresented during her life, she was even more misrepresented after her death. A flood of cowardly scurrilities at once belaboured her. Her good deeds were forgotten ; only her derelictions were remembered. Yet her derelictions were human, and the natural result of the hard school in which she had graduated.

Albert Vandam, who claims to have known her (as he claims to have known everybody) is nothing less than malicious, and dubs Lola Montez "this almost illiterate schemer. . . . There was nothing wonderful about her, except perhaps her beauty and her consummate impudence. She had not a scrap of talent of any kind ; education she had none, for, whether she spoke in English, French, or Spanish, grammatical errors abounded, and her expressions were always those of a pretentious housemaid, unless they were those of an excited fishwife. . . . Her wit was that of the pot-house, which would not have been tolerated in the smoking-room of a club in the small hours."

The comments of Eugène de Mirecourt (otherwise Charles

Jacquot), who included her in his *Les Contemporains*, are similarly unflattering :

Lola Montez a souvent entretenu le public de son origine. Mais elle a toujours menti plus ou moins. . . . Dans ses plus beaux jours de fantaisie romanesque et de négligence grammaticale, Alexandre Dumas n'a rien donné de préférable.

Nor are the biographical references in the ponderous *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* and the *Dictionnaire Universel des Contemporains*, edited respectively by Dr. Hoefer and Gustave Vapereau, any the more accurate. Thus, these works declare that the mother of Lola Montez was a Creole, who had two husbands, one Spanish and one Irish ; and are not quite certain whether Lola herself was born in 1818 or in 1824, and at Seville, or Montrose, or Limerick. Dates and names, too, are equally faulty. On the odd assumption that Karnaoul is the same as Cabul, she is declared to have visited Afghanistan ; the Warsaw adventure is allotted to 1839 (when she was in Calcutta) ; Cornet Heald becomes "M. Head, Lieutenant in the Guards of Queen Victoria" ; and, finally, Lola is "the mother of two beautiful children." Thus is "biography" written—by the dictionary-makers.

But Lola herself did not, it must be admitted, set a much better example, for her own autobiography is far from being in strict accordance with the facts. Thus she begins by lopping half a dozen years off her age ; giving her father brevet military rank ; and claiming an ancestry to which she is not properly entitled. Further, she declares that she was born at Seville.

All said and done, an amazing career, that of Maria Dolores

L O L A M O N T E Z

Eliza Rosanna Gilbert, Baroness von Rosenthal, Countess von Landsfeld, and Canoness of the Order of St. Thérèse. It is doubtful if any woman ever cut a wider swath, or one dotted with more glittering triumphs and more abject failures. A woman, too, of capacity and passion. If imperious and "unconventional," yet sympathetic and big-hearted ; if lacking in chastity, yet full of high courage and charity. The world had been her stage, and she had played many parts on it. Intrigues and *liaisons* by the dozen ; an elopement, a divorce, and at least three *mariages à la main gauche*. Within the compass of her forty-two years she had known pomp and power and poverty ; and had been equally at home in palaces and pawnshops, in conventicles and in mining-camps ; she had danced in opera houses, and she had sung in the streets ; she had been caressed by monarchs, and expelled by understrappers. Men had lived for her, and men had died for her.

The body of Lola Montez has been crumbling in the dust for nearly seventy years. Her name, however, still lives among women who have made history.

CORA PEARL

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CORA PEARL
Mistress " of a Prince

[*Facing p. 227*

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(1)

MID-VICTORIAN young women who warbled “Kathleen Mavourneen” (and wept maidenly tears over its treacly sentiment) selected this ballad in happy ignorance of the fact that its composer, Frederick Nicholls Crouch, was the father of the most notorious courtesan of her day.

Such, however, was the case, for Cora Pearl began life as Emma Crouch.

Although his name, perhaps, was not very musical, Mr. Crouch was an accomplished musician. The son of a well-known violinist, he had, as a small boy, sung in the choir at Westminster Abbey, and he had also been a member of the orchestras at the Coburg Theatre and Drury Lane. Marrying young, he left London and settled down at Plymouth, where the union resulted in a family of sixteen. Among them was the girl, who, born in 1842 and christened Emma Elizabeth, was afterwards to make history as Cora Pearl.

As, with sixteen of them to bring up, there were too many of them at home, Emma, while still a mere child, was packed off to a convent school at Boulogne. She remained there for eight years, returning to England in 1856 with a knowledge of the language, if nothing else. During her absence her father had betaken himself to America, and her mother had consoled herself with a fresh partner.

In such a household, as may be imagined, musical notes were more plentiful than banknotes ; and it was necessary for all its members to contribute to the family exchequer as soon as possible. Emma was, accordingly, despatched to an aunt in London, with a view to being apprenticed to a milliner who had a shop in one of the suburbs. The wages were small, and the aunt was strict. Still, the girl was not unhappy during the two years that she remained with her.

It is unfortunate, but Emma's first slip can be directly traced to the fact that she went to chapel. She had gone there alone one Sunday evening, and, on coming out, she was followed by a strange man. As he drew alongside, he offered a remark.

Forgetting the lessons of the convent, and the sermon to which she had been listening, and only remembering the dull suburban home that was awaiting her, the girl replied. Instantly the other, seizing the opportunity, proposed a walk. Emma, flattered by the unaccustomed attention, did not demur. After all, she was scarcely fifteen, and the well dressed, whiskered gallant knew how to make himself agreeable.

"You're a pretty little girl," he said presently. "I'm sure you like sweets."

Emma did like sweets, and said so. Thereupon the stranger took her off in a cab to what appeared to be a *café*. It was, however, a sordid, flashy establishment, full of odd-looking people who were singing and dancing, and some instinct warned the girl that there was danger ahead. But, fearful of being considered prudish, she agreed to stop, and asked for a cup of coffee. One was promptly brought her. As soon as she had swallowed it, a sense of drowsiness overcame her, and she fell fast asleep.

(2)

The next morning, there was a bitter awakening. On opening her eyes, Emma Crouch saw that she was in an unfamiliar bedroom, and discovered that its other occupant was the stranger of the previous evening. His purpose accomplished, Mephistopheles no longer had any interest in her. Laughing at her tears and entreaties, he gave her a £5 note, and coolly told her to go back to her aunt.

After what had happened, this was the last place to which the desperate and disillusioned girl could go. She knew too well what sort of reception would await her there. Resolving, accordingly, to make the best of things, she took a room in a cheap lodging-house. Among its occupants was a young man named Blinkwell, the proprietor of a dancing saloon in Covent Garden. It was not a high class establishment, but Emma found its patrons good-natured and agreeable. Very soon, too, an intimacy sprang up between William Blinkwell and herself. Before long this developed to such a pitch that, when he made the proposal, she had no objection to accompanying him to Paris.

As neither of the pair had any very strict regard for the proprieties, they travelled on one passport, and put up at a modest hotel as Mr. and Mrs. Blinkwell. The first few weeks of their stay in the capital were pleasant enough. Blinkwell had a fair amount of money to spend, and he was devoted to the girl who had cast in her lot with his. Then an unexpected cloud appeared on the horizon. "Business" suddenly required the young man's return to London. He had taken it as a matter of

course that his Dulcinea would accompany him. She, however, flatly refused to do anything of the sort.

"Please yourself about going or not," was her decision. "I like Paris best, and I shall stop here."

Threats and entreaties failing to alter her purpose, the discomfited Blinkwell, swearing that all women were untrustworthy, went back to his dancing-saloon, and Emma was left behind in Paris. The first thing she did was to realise that Emma Crouch was not a name round which the French could get their tongues with any ease. This being a simple matter to remedy, in its place she adopted that of Cora Pearl. Having done this, she took another step on the downward path she had deliberately elected to follow, and chose a fresh "protector."

Young as she was, she must have had some magnetism, for there were several applicants for the position. The one on whom she bestowed it was a sailor. It was not a good choice, as—and in nautical fashion—Mr. Blinkwell's successor was a man with "a wife in every port." Also, and what was worse, "his heart was bigger than his bank balance." The latter drawback being insurmountable, Cora Pearl (as from this period onwards she was known) very soon left him, and in the year 1860 began a *liaison* with somebody else. The newcomer was a man of wealth and family; and, as he treated her in liberal fashion and set her up in a luxurious flat, the "arrangement" lasted for a couple of years. She then broke it off and accepted the overtures of a man whom she described as "the bearer of a great name of the First Empire." Except that her chronology (always a weak point with her) was wrong, the description was applicable enough, for it belonged to none

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other than Prince Achille Murat. As, however, his financial position was unsatisfactory, and "he merely paid in promises," she transferred her wandering affections to his father, Prince Joachim.

When the elder Murat was in turn also given his *congé* Cora wasted no time choosing a successor. There were plenty of applicants, for Cora Pearl was now (1863) the acknowledged head of her "profession," and quite the most sought-after member of the half-world in Paris. Aristocrats, politicians, and bankers, artists and sculptors, and literary men and poets competed for her favours. She disappointed them all, however, by accepting the offer of the Prince of Orange, a wealthy and dissolute young man who had gone to Paris to "see life." With Cora Pearl for his mistress (in a literal sense), he certainly saw it. Being also prepared to pay liberally for his pleasures, his first "present" to her was 5,000 francs. But this was only the beginning of Cora's demands upon his cheque-book ; and within a few months she had extracted several thousand pounds from him. Then, his family getting the wind of what was happening, recalled their young hopeful to The Hague. From that retreat he wrote piteous letters to his Parisian charmer, complaining of "boredom" and begging her to "remember me to all my friends with and without crinolines."

After this adventure, the amorous Dutch Lothario was despatched to England on a visit. There is an odd rumour that, while he was there, his thoughts turned to matrimony and he aspired to the hand of Princess Alice. Queen Victoria, however (who had a very good Intelligence system), being familiar with his reputation for studying the chart of Cyprus, the project was very quickly nipped. Still, he did have one

small success. This was that, as a souvenir of an excursion which he made to Greenwich, the proprietor of a local public house asked his permission to re-name the establishment "The Prince of Orange."

(3)

After a prince, a duke. This, however, was not a drop in the social scale, for the 11th Duke of Hamilton (a slipshod diarist calls him the 12th) was a man of immense wealth, and incidentally married to Princess Marie of Baden, a cousin of Napoleon III. Cora made his acquaintance in informal fashion while skating one December afternoon in the Bois de Boulogne.

"Cora Pearl upon the ice," remarked the Duke affably.
"What an antithesis, thou hot one!"

This, as she put it, "broke the ice" effectively, and she took full advantage of the chance meeting.

Cora found her ducal admirer all she could wish. "He was," she said, "a perfect gentleman. My greatest pleasure was to listen to his delicate irony. He was specially charming when he sat at the piano in a costume of violet velvet; and he played with much feeling, and sang with exquisite taste." Once, too, during their "friendship," he did her a very good turn at Baden, where she had arrived with a retinue of horses and carriages and servants. Her reputation, however, had preceded her there; and, on attempting to enter the kursaal, she was brusquely repulsed by the authorities, who declared that they had instructions from the Grand Duchess not to admit her. Thereupon she complained to the Duke of the "insult" to

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which she had been subjected. His answer made the flunkeys alter their tone :

“Allow me to offer you my arm, and to have the honour of escorting you to the rooms.”

Noblesse oblige !

But the Duke of Hamilton could not linger indefinitely in Baden, as domestic affairs were summoning him back to Paris. Shortly afterwards, he met his death there under tragic circumstances. Supping one evening in the summer of 1863 with a party of convivial guests at the *Maison Dorée*, he slipped on the stairs and fractured his skull, dying a week later without recovering consciousness. The Duke left two children, a son who succeeded him in the title, and a daughter who married the Prince of Monaco.

Earl Cowley, British Ambassador in Paris, always declared that the “fall” (as the *restaurateur* delicately put it) was the result of “intemperance.” Nor was there any diplomatic gloss in a letter he wrote on the subject :

“The Duke of Hamilton died this morning. It is a terrible history, being nothing more or less than the suite of an orgy.”

Everybody knew that the Duke was drunk, but it took an Ambassador to say so.

Bereft of her “protector,” Cora Pearl lingered in Baden, where she found the green tables of the *kursaal* irresistible. She also found them to swallow up 60,000 fcs. (and those were the days when francs were francs); and, to settle her hotel bill, she had to pledge her diamonds. With the money advanced on them, she went, first, to Vichy, and then to the Riviera, in the gambler’s hope that her “luck” would change. But it did not change. On the contrary, at Monte Carlo she

lost another 70,000 francs., and, as a result, was compelled to apply for the *viantique*. The utmost the Administration would do was to give her a third-class ticket to Paris. Considering the amount of money they had got out of her, this was not exactly lavish.

Cora, who always accepted the buffets of Fate philosophically, merely alluded to the episode as "an amusing recollection, and one in which there was nothing to make me blush." She declared that "something would turn up." Something did, or, rather, somebody. This was a wealthy and eccentric admirer, named Daniloff. Although this new *affaire* promised well, it was deliberately ruptured by herself. They were supping together at the *Maison Dorée* one night, and her companion, full of odd whims, insisted on wearing his hat in the restaurant. Such a breach of etiquette so annoyed Cora that she snatched a stick from an onlooker and broke it over the offending headgear. "I was sorry afterwards," she remarked, "because the stick was a valuable one."

As Cora was without either passion or sentiment, the defection of Daniloff did not upset her. To her way of thinking, there were still as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. The one she next landed was a pasha. This was none other than Khalil-Bey, a member of the crowd of wealthy and exotic pleasure-seekers with whom the capital just then (1867) was swarming. Nominally, the Bey had arrived as Ambassador on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. As a diplomatist, however, he conducted himself as if he were living in the realms of *opera-bouffe*. As he possessed a vast fortune (and a reputation for squandering it on his "pleasures"), Cora Pearl, notwithstanding the fact that he was accompanied by his

harem, promptly marked him for her own. The oriental satrap was quite agreeable. Voluptuous and senile, he humoured all her whims to the full ; and, so long as there remained any of the fifteen million of francs he had deposited in a Paris bank, she extracted considerable sums from him. "He had," she wrote, "the heart of an artist, and the wealth of a mighty lord." But, whatever the capacity of his heart, his banking account was not limitless ; and, a year later, he returned to Constantinople, ruined in pocket.

(4)

During the latter portion of the Second Empire, the Cytherean ladies descended upon Paris in battalions from all over Europe. They were given a warm welcome there, for the City of Pleasure opened its arms in the widest fashion to these Daughters of Pleasure. "They lived," says a shocked chronicler, "in a state of luxury that was nothing less than scandalous" ; and Roqueplan adds that the "normal budget" of the acknowledged heads among them was 300,000 fcs. a year.

Cora's most prominent rivals in these Phrynean lists were Marguerite Bellanger, Adèle Courtois, Anna Deslion, Léonide Leblanc, Alice Labruyère, and Adèle Rémy, each of whom was an acknowledged leader among the aristocracy of the half-world. Although she outshone them all, she had a fierce battle for supremacy with Léonide Leblanc, the "favourite" of the Duc d'Aumaule. "No eyes would ever leave this one," says Frédéric Loliée, "until the dashing Cora Pearl appeared on the scene, with her magnificent horses and carriages and harness and liveried lacqueys. Equipped with such fine

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arrogance, she always drove in front of the postillions of the Baroness de Rothschild and of the famous team of Marshal Serrano." To this account somebody else adds :

On summer afternoons in the Bois, when the Emperor passed in one carriage and Cora in another, it might well have been asked which of the pair belonged to his Majesty and which to the *cocotte*. To the casual glance there appeared to be as much gold on the liveries of one as of the other, as much satin on the cushions, and quite as much dust thrown up by the wheels.

The ladies of the half-world had hospitable instincts ; and from time to time they acted as hostesses. In a book, *The Last Loves of an Emperor* (dealing with the partiality of Napoleon III for society that was both feminine and frail), the Comtesse de Mercy-Argenteau has a reference to this subject :

One night Cora Pearl, a celebrated beauty of the moment, gave a masked fancy dress ball. We knew some friends of the house, and the Princesse Metternich, the Duchesse de Cadore, and I were allowed to go there after much begging. We were quite excited at the idea of approaching those dreadful and fascinating persons, and were probably eager to learn by what contrivance they could so easily win over our fathers, brothers, and husbands.

Although she duly went and saw, the Comtesse was emphatically not conquered. Disappointed at the result, she delivered herself of a peevish (and unfounded) criticism, declaring Cora and her companions to be "repulsive, silly, and dirty."

Emily Soldene, in her *Theatrical and Musical Recollections*, has a reference to Cora Pearl at this period of her career :

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Many people whose names have since become famous struttéd their little hour on the Canterbury stage. In the 'sixties, Miss Louie Crouch, daughter of the composer of "Kathleen Mavourneen," sang there. Miss Crouch was a pretty girl, and, going to Paris on a visit, never came back, but became one of the most celebrated *demi-mondaines* of the Second Empire, the notorious Cora Pearl.

Miss Soldene's memory is unreliable. Cora's Christian name was not "Louie"; she never appeared at the Canterbury (or at any other) music hall; and she did come back to London. Otherwise, the account is fairly accurate.

Greedy and grasping though she was, there was one point in Cora's favour. This was that she was always ready to help a friend, even if that friend happened to be a rival. Here is a letter which she wrote to a Cyprian sister, Adèle Rémy :

Paris,
rue de Ponthieu, 61.

CHÈRE ADÈLE,—*Si vous ne partez pas pour la campagne avant dimanche, vous serez mille fois amiable de venir dîner à la maison, en revenant des courses. Ce sera l'occasion de faire plus ample connaissance avec le baron, qui vous trouvée hier une toute charmante maîtresse de maison. Ne me refusez pas. Je désire vous prouver, dans mes petits moyens, que je sais être reconnaissante des gracieusetés que vous avez toujours eues pour moi. Il n'y aura que trois dames en nous comptant, et trois ou quatre messieurs, pas plus de huit personnes ; un petit dîner sans façon à la mode de mon pays. Tout à vous et mille gracieusetés.*

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The invitation was accepted, and the dinner took place. There Adèle met the promised baron, and, making the most of her opportunity, extracted a handsome settlement from him.

Fond as she was of the limelight, Cora Pearl had no leanings

towards the stage and its sawdust buffooneries. Still, she did once make a professional appearance in the theatre. This was in 1867, when Hector Crémieux, the librettist, wanting to tickle the public, persuaded her to accept the part of Cupidon in his revival of *Orphée aux Enfers*. A house that was filled to overflowing assembled to witness her début ("wearing corsage far too low," says one stern critic, "and not sufficiently adhesive to the bust"), and the stalls and boxes fetched fancy prices.

To do her justice, the newcomer had no delusions as to her theatrical abilities. "I played the part twelve nights running," she said. "At the beginning, my friends applauded me enough to bring down the house. But I was hissed at last; and I left the boards without regret or any wish to return to them. Such is glory!"

Henry Vizetelly (who quite wrongly calls her a "groom's daughter") was present on this occasion. "She was," he says, "hissed off the stage of the Bouffes by Pipe-en-Bois and his band of students, when, smothered from head to foot in diamonds, the brazen-faced cocotte tripped before the foot-lights with all the confidence of an assured success."

Arthur Meyer, too, in his entertaining *Ce que mes yeux ont vu*, has an entertaining note on the subject: "*Des sifflets avaient encore accueilli Mlle. Cora Pearl, qui n'avait pas crant de planter des diamants jusque sur ses cothurnes.*" That this, however, was not the only part of her costume where she exhibited diamonds was clear, when, as the curtain fell, she lay on her back and kicked her heels in the air.

(5)

"I have squandered money enormously," wrote Cora in her *Memoirs*. She never wrote a truer word. Money slipped through her fingers like sand. The upkeep of her house in the Champs Elysées ran away with a vast sum, for she filled it from floor to ceiling with pictures and busts and tapestries and costly furniture. A strange medley there. In the Pompadour dining-room (standing cheek by jowl with vulgarities from Tottenham Court Road) were cabinets of rare woods, valuable china, silver-gilt services, and a quantity of gold plate ; and the boudoir, upholstered in pink silk, was crowded with Venetian mirrors, ormolu clocks, bronze casts, hand-painted fans, richly bound books, and musical instruments. There was also a marble bathroom, sunk into the floor of which were her initials ; and on one of the walls was her portrait, bearing the inscription :

*Et la riche Angleterre,
Plus d'une fois dans l'eau jeta ses filets
Avant d'y retrouver une Perle aussi chère !*

To be well in "the movement," she also had a motto and crest complete. The crest was that of Diane de Poitiers, and the motto (evidently selected for her by somebody not above taking liberties with Virgil) was *Parcere subjectis et delectare superbos.*

When at her zenith (somewhere about the year 1867), the extravagance of Cora Pearl was the talk of Paris. Her dresses and jewels and carriages eclipsed those of all the other *demi-mondaines* put together. She filled her house with valuable

china and knick-knacks ; and her *chef* had a ministerial salary. Even in the depths of winter she would have fruit and flowers and supplies of exotic delicacies delivered by special courier : and, although she ate and drank sparingly herself, she kept an irreproachable table for her guests. "One supper, which I gave to twenty men," she said, "cost me £500 in English money. But I was obliged to feed the creatures well, so as to get them to loosen their purse-strings afterwards."

This policy undoubtedly answered, for, at the height of her fame (or infamy), she had an income of at least £50,000 a year. Most of it was contributed by a couple of rich young spendthrifts, Paul Demidoff and Basil Nariskhine, each of whom lavished on her a liberal proportion of the ill-gotten roubles they wrung from their serfs in Russia. Others in her *entourage* were said to be Comte Baccioli (the Imperial Chamberlain), Baron Haussmann, the Duc de Morny, and the Duc de Persigny. Added to these, there was a cosmopolitan crowd of opulent Hebrews in Paris from whom she also extracted considerable sums.

Yet, despite all her experience of men, she was taken in by them more than once. A specially notable case was that of a Serbian, whom she knew as the Prince de Hersant. He established "confidence" by airily dismissing a suggestion that he should tell the police that he had lost a pocket-book in which were 15,000 francs.

"It isn't worth while," he said carelessly. "If they have been found by a rich man, he will give them back to the police. If, however, it is some poor devil of a pauper, he will keep them, and save me the trouble of offering him a reward."

After this, Cora had no qualms about trusting such an

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individual. She had several, however, when, at the end of a fortnight, the “Prince” disappeared, and with him a quantity of her most valuable jewellery.

The despoiled lady accepted the buffet in philosophical fashion.

“De Hersant was a Prince all right,” was her shrewd comment, “but a Prince of the Order of Rogues !”

This de Hersant business was not the only one that developed disastrously for Cora Pearl. A second *chevalier d'industrie* actually contrived to make off with £20,000 belonging to her. This time, however, she had no diffidence about putting the police on his track, and he was arrested and clapped into prison.

(6)

If her own account is to be trusted, Cora Pearl next had an *affaire* with no less an individual than Napoléon III. “The Emperor,” she says, “favoured me greatly ; loaded me with money and jewellery ; and acknowledged me publicly.” She also adds that he employed her “on secret missions connected with the destinies of France” ; and a Paris journalist remarks, “there is good authority for believing that the Emperor lost both his health and his reputation through suffering this woman’s companionship.” It is, however, very doubtful if there is a syllable of truth in this story. Certainly, Hector Fleischmann does not mention it in his *Napoléon III et ses Maîtresses*, and he gives a very full catalogue of all the Imperial lights-of-love. Still, what is established is that she did have one “protector” who was, at any rate, within the shadow of

the throne. This was the Emperor's cousin, Prince Napoléon.

The Emperor was furious at his relative's indiscretion ; and, to put him beyond the siren's reach, sent him to join the army in Algiers. He did not, however, stop there long, for Cora soon drew him back to the boulevards of his beloved Paris.

As well as his strength, Prince Napoléon (the "Plon-Plon" of the comic papers) had his weakness. He was no Cato in his passion for morality. He had inherited a complex for women ; and, until he met this one, his favourites among the Phrynes of Paris were Anna Deslion and Léonide Leblanc. It was when tiring of the gilded and voluptuous charms of the latter that he devoted himself to Cora Pearl. He was extremely liberal, for, during the six years that the relationship continued, he allowed her 12,000 fcs. a month, and he also presented her with a house in the rue de Chaillot, for which he paid 200,000 fcs. From its general magnificence, this was known to privileged visitors as *Les Petites Tuileries*.

A florid description of Cora's new nest indicates that the term was not misapplied :

The vestibule contains an abundance of mirrors and busts and pictures. A luxuriously carpeted flight of stairs leads to the first landing. The drawing-room is long and lofty, with silk-covered walls and moulded ceiling ; and the furniture is richly brocaded in pink damask. On an ebony table near the window is a bronze of the Prince Imperial ; and works of art, statuary, flowers, and ornaments are everywhere scattered in happy profusion.

As well as sums of money, the Prince Napoléon, who was liberality itself, was always showering gifts in kind upon the chatelaine of the rue de Chaillot. Once, when he happened to be

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travelling, he sent her a box of the most expensive orchids procurable. Considering this to be "meanness," their recipient invited a number of choice spirits to supper, threw the petals on the carpet, and danced a can-can on them. But her sense of humour was apt to be towards the bizarre. Thus, on another occasion, she actually allowed herself to be served up in a gigantic pie-dish (not so much *en casserole* as *en camisole*) to a select gathering of masculine admirers at the Café Anglais.

Frédéric Loliée, in his *La Fête Impériale*, has several references to Cora Pearl at this period in her career. He writes of her, however, as "*Elisabeth Cruch, connue sous le nom de Cora.*" Still, there is no mistaking whom he really means. His considered opinion of her was anything but flattering. Thus : "*Avec ses façons vulgaires, ses airs canailles, sa voix rauque elle était loin de représenter une image de grâce et de délicatesse spirituelle.*"

"The manners of the gutter, and a harsh voice."

Such criticism was unjustifiable, for Cora Pearl was always careful to mix with none but men of birth and breeding, and clever enough to pick up something from them. Then, as for her "harsh voice," this is undoubtedly a libel, for she could sing very well. She must, too, have had charm, since all were agreed that she did not come up to the accepted standards of feminine beauty. Thus, her face was fat and round, her eyes small, and her hair a vivid red. Still, her complexion was good ; and, until she took to putting on flesh, her figure was so well modelled that sculptors were continually pestering her to give them sittings. The only one among them to whose importunities she yielded was Gallois. If Cora is to be trusted, she paid him 300,000 fcs. for a marble statue. She is, however, not to be trusted.

(7)

The outbreak of hostilities between France and Germany affected Cora Pearl in a serious fashion. Still, she managed at the last moment to get out of Paris. The Prince, however, remained there. Hearing that his inamorata was, while living on his money, consoling herself with somebody else, he sent her a sharp letter of remonstrance :

The situation has become impossible, and I have definitely resolved to terminate it. Everything between us must now be considered as finished, and we must never meet again.

Still, the Prince's anger did not last long. In a few months he had quite forgotten and forgiven, and, travelling incognito, joined Cora in England. But he had some difficulty in doing so. "These abominable Communists," he wrote, "have even detained my shirts in Paris." Cora, who had preceded him to London, had secured a suite of rooms at the Grosvenor Hotel. The identity of the pair, however, becoming known, the manager insisted that they should leave. Thereupon they betook themselves to another hotel, where "insular prejudice," as the lady termed it, was less pronounced. Unfortunately, this second one had some Germans stopping in it. As this was too much for her companion's Gallic *amour-propre*, they set up housekeeping together at Knightsbridge, where they entertained on a big scale. Since all their doings were sedulously chronicled, a gaping crowd would follow them whenever they appeared in public. "The stares of the loungers," ran a gossipy paragraph, "assume a double intensity the moment the handsome liveries and well matched horses of Madame

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Pearl's equipage are seen amid the fashionable throng in the Park."

The expedition to London was not a complete success. As a matter of fact, it led to a rupture between the pair. The result was, the Prince betook himself to Italy, and Cora returned to Paris. It was then that she got into a situation that was responsible for her ultimate downfall. Being desperately in want of ready money, as the princes and pashas and dukes and diplomats had cut off supplies, she accepted the overtures of a fresh aspirant, Alexandre Duval by name. He was a loutish youth ("an adipose Adonis" was one description), but he had inherited a fortune of eight million francs from the cheap restaurant business of his father, who had begun life as a butcher.

That a woman who had always been the most exclusive of her class should thus condescend to such an obvious plebeian as young Duval was a severe shock to her one-time aristocratic admirers. Still, as they would do nothing for her, she felt that she had to do something for herself. After all, the ex-butcher boy's money was as good as anybody else's. Also, he had much more of it than most people.

There was one marked exception to those who looked askance at Cora for her "come down." This, oddly enough, was Prince Napoléon himself. He even sent her a letter from Switzerland (where he had gone to avoid a still disturbed Paris) which showed that he was fully cognisant of this latest activity and that he approved of it.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—In a few days, if all goes well, I hope to send you some money. This wretched Paris ! All the news I get from there is very sad. Listen to a piece of serious advice :

Go somewhere very far away. Don't come to me here. Geneva is Puritanical, and all my friends insist that my situation demands rigid propriety. It is hard to be compelled, at my age and with my habits, to conduct oneself in such a fashion! Beware of poverty. Put all your valuables in a place of safety. It is madness to leave anything at home, especially jewellery. Before the storm bursts is the time to seek shelter. There will be great trouble. Take care that it does not catch you. Settle as few bills as possible; deposit all you can in a safe place; and rest assured that events will no longer be as they were in the happy days of the Empire. Don't imagine that I am jealous. Employ your charms to your profit. Since there will be no more processions of fat oxen, do what you can to lead your stout butcher in triumph to the slaughter-house. In such times as these one cannot afford to be over delicate.

Thus licensed, so to speak, Cora turned the head of the infatuated youth in earnest, and extracted vast sums from him. Her "tariff" was 7,000 f.s. a week. Duval paid it cheerfully. When his bankers, alarmed at the cheques he was signing, warned his mother, Madame Duval assembled a *conseil de famille* and endeavoured to appoint trustees to prevent him squandering any more of his fortune. She also discovered that he had procured thousands of pounds' worth of diamonds on credit from a London pawnbroker, and that his mistress was arranging to pledge these for him in Paris.

The "understanding" with Duval lasted just as long as did his bank balance. When this had been spent, Cora, as was her custom at such times, dismissed him without ceremony.

"If you want to see me again," was her ultimatum, "bring some money or jewellery with you."

Swearing compliance, the wretched lad begged for a final interview. Although it was granted, he presented himself at

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an inauspicious moment, for his charmer happened to be engaged with her hairdresser. What, however, was worse was that he had not come with a diamond necklace which he had promised. The result was, the angry lady shut the door in his face, and returned to *Figaro*. This was too much, and the lovesick youth pulled out a revolver and declared he would kill himself. His marksmanship, however, was so inferior that, although he fired six shots at his breast, only one of them took effect.

The French papers, following their customary practice of publishing first and inquiring afterwards, immediately declared that young Duval was dead.

Yesterday [said the *Figaro*] there occurred in Paris, after a very determined effort to kill himself, the death of a gentleman of the first family. At seven o'clock in the morning he fired six revolver shots into his heart, and died after lingering in agony for two hours.

A good deal of excitement among the dissipated circles of Paris [added another journalist] has just resulted from the suicide of a wealthy young man in the house of a female who, as a member of the *demi-monde*, has secured considerable notoriety. The unhappy victim of an illicit passion is M. Duval, son of the butcher who amassed a fortune by establishing cheap restaurants.

A special correspondent also wired a column to London giving fuller particulars :

A very shocking suicide, resulting, we fear, from has just furnished Paris with another sensation ; and a member of the *demi-monde*, known as Cora Pearl, has added a fresh laurel to her unenviable garland. It seems that M. Alexandre Duval, the son of an intelligent butcher, having been involved

in heavy financial difficulties on her account, has killed himself because the fair and frail one wished to be rid of a ruined lover. The victim was a man of 52, and, by reason of his birth and position, and accomplishments, was clearly destined to enjoy a life of happiness. In a feeble voice he told the doctors that he had shot himself to prove his love for this thoroughly heartless woman.

(8)

These reports were exaggerated. Duval was twenty-five, not fifty-two, and he had not killed himself. As a matter of fact, he made a good recovery, and lived for many years, to cut, by reason of his absurd amours with ballet-girls, a figure of fun in the theatrical world of Paris. Still, while his injury was not serious, it was serious enough to set on foot a popular clamour for the expulsion of his mistress. This was so strong that, although she endeavoured to shelter herself behind a Union Jack hoisted from her roof, the Préfecture announced that she must leave the country that very day. "She asked for a few hours' respite, but M. Patinot was inflexible. He also ordered the removal of the obnoxious emblem."

Henry Labouchere refers to this flag episode in one of his letters from Paris during the winter of 1871 :

A singular remonstrance has been received at the British Embassy. In the rue de Chaillot resides a celebrated English courtesan, called Cora Pearl, and above her house floats the English flag. The inhabitants of the street request the Ambassador of England, "a country the purity and decency of whose manners is well known," to cause this bit of bunting, which is a scandal in their eyes, to be hauled down. I left Mr. Wodehouse consulting the text-writers upon international law, in order to discover a precedent for the case.

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His Excellency, however, does not appear to have discovered one, for the Union Jack continued to float proudly in the breeze, an emblem of the lady's "patriotism."

Breathing fire and fury against her traducers, Cora Pearl hurried off to the British Embassy, and endeavoured to secure the intervention of Lord Lyons.

"These pigs of French police call me a 'loose woman,'" she exclaimed indignantly, "and have said I must leave Paris at once."

"Then, why not go?"

"Because I am not a 'loose woman.'"

"Indeed?"

"Certainly not. I am nothing of the sort. I am a landed proprietor, and own an estate at Ermenonville. That's how I get my income. Also, since I am an Englishwoman, I am entitled to your protection as British Ambassador. What is your lordship going to do about it?"

"I am sorry, madam, but this is not a case for diplomatic interference," was the response.

When the discomfited applicant got back to her house, it was to find an English journalist had appeared on the scene, and was requesting an interview. Thinking that this would rehabilitate her in the eyes of the world she had left, she granted him one readily enough.

"I am quite delighted to see an Englishman," she said. "These horrid French officials want to make me out an infamous character. Isn't it dreadful of them? They even talk of compelling me to leave the country. What do you think of that?"

When the visitor had murmured his sympathy, she put a challenging question to him.

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“Suppose you, like this poor Duval, said you wanted to live with me, and I declined your offer, would it be fair to blame me because you shot yourself?”

Before this disconcerting query could be answered, she went on to something else.

“People have actually been saying that Duval gave me this house, and also my house in the country at Maisons Lafitte. They are quite wrong. The person who gave them to me was the Prince Napoléon. I want you to make that clear.”

With his note-book bulging with good “copy,” the pressman hurried off and despatched a long account of the interview to London. To this he added a supplementary telegram :

Yesterday afternoon Mademoiselle Cora Pearl went three times to the sick bed of M. Duval. Her object, I understand, was to get him to persuade his mother to ask the authorities to cancel her expulsion. At the third visit, instead of the son, she encountered Madame Duval. A violent scene took place between the mother and the mistress, and the latter was driven from the house by the domestics. That night she left Paris.

Albert Wolff had a leading article on the subject. He was very severe towards the victim of the intrigue, declaring him to be “merely an idle young waster who richly deserved what he got.” As for Cora, he added, “her special mode of life excuses her conduct. Since her business was to deceive everybody, it cannot be said that here she deceived her lover. . . . We must not blame this wanton too much. If she merits no esteem, she should not be bespattered with contempt. After all, she is not worse than others of her profession. As for Duval, a man with any care for his honour and dignity should know how to die more correctly. Let us keep our tears and

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our emotions for more deserving matters, and speak of this miserable drama with all the disdain that its two actors inspire in us."

While she was grateful to M. Wolff for his "championship" (as she considered it), Cora had her own opinion as to the rights and wrongs of *l'affaire Duval*. "Although," she protested, "I was not responsible for the folly of that young man, I was required to pay for it, and to pay dearly!"

The Riviera, to which she betook herself, was not a happy choice, as, the day after she arrived there, she was peremptorily ordered to leave Monte Carlo, on the grounds that she had been expelled from French soil. The same thing happened at Nice, where, although she had paid three months' rent in advance for a villa, she found a "gang of prudish officials." Considering it best to sojourn in another country until the Duval business should have "blown over," she took the hint that was given her and left for Italy by the next train. Some months later, when the Parisians had other matters with which to occupy themselves, she returned to the boulevards.

It was when she was back in the capital that Cora Pearl hit on an idea which would, she felt, re-establish her in the good graces of the Préfecture. This was to hoist the Red Cross and set aside her house in the rue de Chaillot as a hospital for wounded soldiers. The gesture was a good one, even if this assumption of the "Lady of the Lamp" rôle made the public snigger. But she took it seriously, and met all the charges for doctors and nurses and medicines. The expense was heavy, and amounted to at least 25,000 francs. She did not mind this. What, however, she did mind was the refusal of the commissioners to give her any recognition. They were even so

ungracious as to withhold the customary certificate that was given everybody who had contributed a yard of lint or a strip of plaster. Furious and indignant, she took legal proceedings to recover her outlay. As a result, she was awarded a sum of 1,500 francs. She flung the money in the face of the official who brought it.

(9)

If Cora Pearl's life had been "merry," it was also short. Her star set as swiftly as it had risen. The public had long memories, and the Duval business still rankled. Added to this, she had lost her power of attracting men of wealth and position. The vogue she had once exercised was gone. Younger and fresher recruits queened it in her place ; and, as a boulevardier said, "*La femme, qui côta ses faveurs jusqu'à dix milles francs la nuit, tomba au rang des demoiselles à cinq louis et plus bas encore.*"

"From ten thousands francs a night to a mere five louis and less."

But the time was to come when even the five-louis tariff was beyond her reach. It came with dramatic swiftness. Then nobody wanted her at any price. She was but a shadow of her old self. She had lost her looks and her charm and her figure. Her once splendid health, too, had gone, and she was being ravaged by a terrible disease.

The inevitable happened. Abandoned by the phalanx of "protectors" who had once battled among themselves for the privilege of catering to her slightest wish, and without having saved a sou out of all the vast sums she had received, Cora Pearl fell on very evil times. In a desperate attempt to get hold

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of a little money with which to settle some pressing debts, she published a volume of *Mémoires*. Frédéric Loliée, who read the book, dubbed it "a catalogue of dull love-affairs, devoid of either passion or poetry, and, in spite of the laundress, nothing but a basket of exceedingly dirty linen." He was not far wrong, for it was a ridiculous and slipshod production, the episodes being strung together with an utter disregard for dates and a supreme contempt for facts.

While the volume was being written, Cora Pearl, following the example of another English demirep, Harriette Wilson, wrote to various individuals mentioned therein, and offered, "if it were made worth her while," to suppress the certain paragraphs. This attempt at literary blackmail, however, was a failure, for the majority of her intended "victims" (echoing the Duke of Wellington) said "publish and be damned," or words to that effect. The result was, she did publish. Still, fearful, perhaps, of reprisals, she altered most of the names. But the disguises were transparent, and anybody could have seen through them. Thus, the Duke of Hamilton was "Moray"; Murat was "Maurat"; the Prince of Orange was "Citron"; Prince Napoléon was "Duke Jean"; and Comte Rostopchine was "Count Rostoff."

As was to be expected, the *Mémoires*, under these circumstances, fell very flat. When the few louis she received from their sale were gone, the pawnshop kept her going for a time. The bulk of her goods, however, were seized by dissatisfied creditors whose bills had not been discharged. Catalogued as "souvenirs" (together with a stock of others of very doubtful origin) they were afterwards offered at auction to a curious public. Among the lots thus brought to the hammer were

F E M I N I N E F R A I L T Y

didactic pietists will have little difficulty in discovering one—“the wages of sin is death.”

For all that she was a courtesan (and, as such, neither pure nor simple) Cora Pearl has sepulture in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. But this distinction is her due. Courtesan as she was, she none the less made history ; she held an acknowledged position ; she wielded considerable power ; and once she stood behind the steps of a throne.

LAVINIA RYVES

R.F.



LAVINIA RYVES
Claimant to "Royalty"

LAVINIA RYVES

(1)

THERE is more authentic romance in the streets of London than in any novel. In the quiet, half-genteel stuccoey and prosaic streets of Camden Town there lives, in indigence and neglect, a lady of noble descent, who has the blood of two Royal Families in her veins, being descended from the last King of Poland and the great-uncle of the present Queen of England.

This appetite-whetting announcement appeared in a Newcastle journal during December 1863 ; and was afterwards elaborated in a twopenny pamphlet, entitled "*A Suppressed Princess : the Authentic, Romantic, and Painful History of an Excluded Member of the Royal Family.*" The name of the author was given as Landor Praed. Such, however, was a pseudonym, for the pamphlet was really written by George Jacob Holyoake.

The "indigent lady of noble descent," whose sad lot it was to live in Camden Town, instead of in Buckingham Palace, and whose unhappy position engaged the sympathetic pen of such a staunch secularist as Holyoake, had a considerable idea of her importance. In fact, she claimed to be "Lavinia, Princess of Cumberland and Duchess of Lancaster" ; and it was under this style that, in 1866, she asked the Court of Probate and Divorce to pronounce her the legitimate granddaughter of Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, brother of George III.

Naturally enough, the case excited immense public interest. The volume of opinion, however, was far from complimentary to the petitioner. "This action," declared a summarist, "is one of the most curious in the recent experiences of Courts of Justice. The tale on which it was founded exhibited a singular compound of self-delusion and fraud; and though, when closely examined, it was found to be replete with contradictions and absurdities, it had in it a tinge of romantic interest, and was woven into apparent consistency, by means of an elaborate apparatus of documents and pseudo-historical records, which gave the case a superficial aspect of verisimilitude."

The real name of the petitioner was Mrs. Lavinia Janetta Horton Ryves. She was a married woman (but separated from her husband, Anthony Thomas Ryves), and the defendant to the action was the Attorney-General. There was also a second petitioner joined to the suit, in William Henry Ryves, son of the first petitioner. What Mrs. Ryves was asking was that her late mother, Mrs. de Serres, should be pronounced the legitimate daughter of the Duke of Cumberland. To establish this remarkable contention (the effect of which would have been to have imperilled the position of Queen Victoria), it was asserted that in the year 1767 the Duke had married one Olive Wilmot, and that their daughter Olive had married one John de Serres, whose daughter Lavinia, the first petitioner, had married Anthony Ryves. It all sounded very involved, but this was the gist of it.

The claim was not new. As a matter of fact, it had been before the public for nearly fifty years, challenging attention in Parliament and the Press. It had also occupied the Law Courts

from 1846 onwards, when Mrs. Ryves filed a bill in Chancery, praying that the Duke of Wellington, as executor of George IV, should be instructed to hand over to her a sum of £15,000, which she alleged had been left her mother by the King. The decision of the Court was the obvious one—viz. that His Majesty's will, being a Royal one, could not be admitted to probate.

In 1850 the indefatigable Lavinia found a fresh method of focusing public attention on herself. She drew up a brochure, *An Appeal for Royalty : a Letter to her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, from Lavinia, Princess of Cumberland and Duchess of Lancaster*, a copy of which, together with a "Memorial," she sent to Buckingham Palace. In this, on the grounds of "poverty and distress, with six young children dependent on her, and a son almost reduced to a skeleton," she asked for financial help from the Royal purse ; and also that she should be granted "recognition."

"My motives," she wrote, "cannot be misunderstood, when it is remembered that, walking in the footsteps of my late Royal and revered mother, a worthy daughter of the House of Brunswick, I have hitherto scrupulously guarded the *great State secret* which so deeply affects the honour of that House, and which the accident of birth threw into my keeping." This, the memorialist explained, was nothing less than a bigamous marriage of George III to Hannah Lightfoot.

As a finishing touch, there was submitted a bill for something over a million sterling (being alleged arrears of revenues from the Duchy of Lancaster), and of a further £105,520, the proceeds of various legacies and annuities left her mother by George III and the Duke of Kent. Anxious, however, to

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avoid causing “pecuniary inconvenience,” Mrs. Ryves suggested a compromise. This was “to forego everything” (beyond a mere bagatelle of £100,000) if “my claims to be declared and treated as a member of the Royal Family” should be examined by a competent Court of Judicature.

The official response was as terse as it was unsatisfactory :

Buckingham Palace,
March 14th, 1850.

MADAM,—I have received the commands of Her Majesty the Queen to inform you, in reply to your application dated yesterday, that the claims advanced in that letter render it impossible for Her Majesty to accede to your request for pecuniary assistance.

I am, madam,

Your obedient, humble servant,
C. B. PHIPPS.

Mrs. Ryves.

This was check. Still, it was not checkmate, for the subsequent passing of the Legitimacy Declaration Act of 1858 afforded Mrs. Ryves another opportunity of re-opening the matter. Her first step, adopted in 1859, was to petition to be declared the legitimate issue of the marriage of her mother to Mr. de Serres. As this point had never been contested, the decree was granted.

In 1863 Mrs. Ryves took the next step in her scheduled programme. Having been declared “legitimate” herself, she now asked for a declaration that the Duke of Cumberland had contracted a valid marriage with her grandmother, Olive Wilmot, nearly a hundred years earlier. “But the filing of this petition was entrusted to counsel and solicitors who, to speak euphoniously, were lukewarm in the cause.” As a result, it was

not until August 1865 that an application was made that the issue should be tried by a special jury. It was, however, ruled that the Attorney-General should first put in an answer traversing the claim. The Attorney-General having done so, the action was at last entered in the list ; and on June 1st, 1866, the trial began.

As has been said, this claim to "recognition" was of much earlier origin than the year 1866. It had really started in 1817, when Mrs. de Serres set the ball rolling by "memorialising" George III on the subject. She began modestly enough, by announcing herself as nothing nearer the throne than the "love child" of the Duke of Cumberland and a certain Mrs. Payne. Presently, however, she felt that to admit such a slip on the part of her parents would render her prospects of being accepted as a Princess somewhat negligible. She, therefore, abandoned the suggestion of a baton-sinister, and, summarily dropping Mrs. Payne from her family tree, now declared that her mother was Olive Wilmot, daughter of the Rev. Dr. Wilmot ; and that, born in lawful wedlock, she, Mrs. de Serres, was really the Princess Olive of Cumberland. As to how she had first learned of her distinguished lineage, she gave two separate accounts. According to the first one, the news had come in a "sealed package" direct from the Earl of Warwick ; according to the second one, the messenger of Fate had been the departed spirit of that nobleman's father.

Notwithstanding all that it implied, the announcement was received with chilling indifference. No conflagration on the

Thames ; no frantic messages from the editors of peerages begging for fuller particulars ; and no move from the Royal Family, or expression of a desire to welcome this new member to their circle.

But there were reasons for such an attitude. The fact was, the authorities had much more knowledge of Mrs. de Serres than she imagined. They knew a great deal about her. And what they knew was distinctly damaging. Her *dossier* revealed her as an adventuress who would stick at nothing.

Thomas de Serres, the husband of Mrs. de Serres, was an artist, and, if the gossip of the period was correct, he had married her very much against his will. Certainly, the union was an ill-assorted one, for from the first the bride was extravagant and imaginative. As to her extravagance, she drove her husband to a debtor's prison ; and, as to her imagination, she wrote to the Prince Regent offering to lend that distinguished spendthrift vast sums of money. But this was not all, for, in addition to declaring that the Rev. Dr. Wilmot (who died a reputed bachelor of eighty) was her grandfather, she asserted that he was the long unknown author of the *Letters of Junius*.

Picturesque invention could scarcely have been pushed beyond this. But it was pushed beyond this, as Dr. Wilmot was next declared to have "privately married," in 1749, the Princess Poniatowsky, daughter of Stanislaus, King of Poland. There was an obvious slip here, for at this date Stanislaus was a youth of seventeen. "He must," says an historian, who noted this point, "have been a very remarkable man if he then had a marriageable daughter." Of course, what Mrs. de Serres meant (if she meant anything) was that the lady was his sister.

It was from this “romance” that, according to her, had sprung her mother, Olive Wilmot, wife of the amorous (and allegedly bigamous) Duke of Cumberland.

Thomas de Serres had, to do him justice, always refused to believe in his wife’s claims to distinguished lineage. In fact, he had disinherited her, “for having assumed the name and title of Princess of Cumberland without the least foundation whatever.” Nor, in his considered opinion, were her morals beyond criticism. “The produce of my labours,” he declared in a letter to a friend, “shall be appropriated to every use but that of encouraging a wife in whoredom,” and his last will referred to her as “living in a state of concubinage and infamy with a low fellow named Petre, on whom she has bestowed the names of Fitzclarence and Fitzstrathen, on the same pretensions to royal birth as herself.”

In order to live up to her position as a “Princess,” the next step of Mrs. de Serres was to drive about London in a hired carriage, with the Royal Arms emblazoned on the panels, attended by a pair of flunkeys in green and gold liveries. She even secured an invitation to the Lord Mayor’s 1820 Guildhall banquet, where she hobnobbed with civic greatness to her heart’s content. “On retiring, after the banquet,” we read, “her train was borne by the ladies of eight Aldermen; and in the drawing-room refreshments were handed to her by the Lady Mayoress in person.” She also “visited in state Drury Lane Theatre, where she was received by the manager in full dress.” Yet, despite such “proofs,” the Lord Chancellor and the Home Secretary still held back. Mr. Hobhouse even wrote a brusque letter on the subject to one of her champions :

SIR,—I am directed by Lord Sidmouth to acquaint you that the assumption of a title and equipage to which she [Mrs. de Serres] has no pretence has been extremely offensive to the King, and that her perseverance in this line of conduct cannot fail to excite His Majesty's displeasure.

But “perseverance” was the strongest suit of Mrs. de Serres. In 1821, with the “moral support” of an odd barrister, Henry Nugent Bell (who dabbled in genealogy as a side-line to his other activities), she hit on a fresh scheme for securing publicity. Presenting herself one afternoon at Islington Church, she persuaded the curate there to re-baptise her as “Olive, daughter of the Duke of Cumberland and Olive his wife.”

An entertaining account of the episode is given in a contemporary journal :

About 11 o'clock in the forenoon of Thursday last, the carriage apparently of a person of rank was driven to the gate of the Church-yard. The curiosity of the neighbouring inhabitants was much excited at seeing a portly, well-dressed dame, apparently about fifty, handed from the coach by a dashing young fellow of no more than half her age, on whom it was concluded she was now about to bestow her fair hand at the altar. . . . The curiosity excited by this mysterious proceeding remained ungratified till the secret became known to those whose prying inquisitiveness led them the day after to peep into the Parish register, where the matter stands clearly developed.

This paragraph attracted the following reply from the lady to whom it referred :

To THE EDITOR

The mention of the baptism of the Princess of Cumberland in your Paper was correct, but the statement added was not

merited, it being a relative who accompanied Her Highness, William Henry Fitzclarence, Esq.; and certainly the Princess performed but a religious duty in being received into the Established Church that brought her ancestors to the throne. She had been half-baptised at three hours old, as the infant of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, but not received into the Church until the 6th of September, 1821. Her Highness, wishing to approach her God, and to satisfy the English nation as to her legitimacy, adopted the called-for measure—bound by every principle of conscientious honour to respect the ceremonies of that religion which has so eminently distinguished Great Britain, and preserved its internal repose amidst the turmoil of surrounding States !

OLIVE.

In her capacity of “Princess,” the next step adopted by Mrs. de Serres was to write to the Bishop of London, saying that she wished to be confirmed by him. His Grace’s response was disappointing. “The lady,” he wrote back, “who desires, as Princess of Cumberland, to be confirmed must feel that the Bishop would not be justified in adopting any such measures as would involve him pronouncing an opinion on her claims ; and that it would be highly improper for him to enter into any discussion of a question which he has no authority to examine.”

Despite this episcopal snub, Mrs. de Serres managed to secure the sympathetic ear of Sir Gerard Noel, M.P., “who took up her case with much frothy fervour.” On March 23rd, 1823, the hon. member, seconded by Joseph Hume, moved for the appointment of a Select Committee to enquire into the subject. The choice of this particular champion was not a happy one. “Nothing,” said a hearer, “could have been more unfortunate than the conduct of the dozing old baronet.”

The criticism was well founded. Thus, instead of confining himself to the business entrusted him, he delivered a long and rambling speech, in which he touched upon all sorts of extraneous matters, such as the political views of his tenantry, his own services to Parliament, and “the fact of he himself having worn the Prince’s button.” The result was, by the time he sat down he had worn out everybody’s patience.

This was made abundantly clear when the documents submitted by Sir Gerard Noel were examined. One purported to be a certificate of the Duke of Cumberland’s marriage to Olive Wilmot ; another to be from the Earl of Chatham, declaring that the Duke had contracted a later and bigamous marriage with somebody else ; and another to be a will of George III, leaving Mrs. de Serres £15,000, “as a recompense to our said niece for the misfortunes she may have known through her father, our brother of Cumberland.” All the attesting witnesses were dead. Apart from this drawback, Lord Warwick did not apparently know his own name, since he had signed a certificate as “Brooke” at a period when his signature was “Greville.” There were other flaws ; but these were more than enough to enable Robert Peel, the Home Secretary, to convince everybody (except, perhaps, Sir Gerard Noel and Mr. Hume) that “Mrs. de Serres was herself, either practising a most impudent imposture, or else was the innocent dupe of others.”

The result was inevitable, and “the motion for an enquiry into the matter was loudly and unanimously negatived.”

Thus an entry in the *Annual Register* for 1823. It was not, however, entirely correct, for, as always happens, a number of people still professed to believe in the lady’s claim. She even

produced a letter from her inexhaustible stock, purporting to have been written by the Duke of Kent. This, dated November 1st, 1819, actually appointed her "the guardian and director of my daughter Alexandrina's education . . . the sole guardian of my daughter until she is of age."

It was the habit of Mrs. de Serres to look well ahead. Still, she had not then looked so far ahead as to visualise the possibility of her youthful charge one day becoming Queen Victoria.

When her petition was thus negatived by a hugely entertained House of Commons, Mrs. de Serres got into very low financial waters. The result was, the hired carriage, with the Royal Arms complete, was returned to the stables from which it had been jobbed ; the funkeys were given notice ; and their gorgeous liveries went to the pawnshop. As for the ambitious lady herself, she went to the chill discomforts of the "King's Bench" rules, "where she languished for several years as a debtor." In 1834 she took herself and her "claims" from this unsympathetic world to another one ; and was buried in St. James's Church, Piccadilly.

Even in death Olive de Serres could not divest herself of the pretensions to which she had clung in life. The obsequies were linked up with characteristic pomp. "Several ladies and gentlemen moving in the best society attended the funeral ; the coffin was composed of the costly materials usually appropriated to Royalty, and bore an inscription setting forth the titles and honours to which the deceased had so long laid claim."

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Olive de Serres left two daughters. The younger one, Britannia, having no desire to be a "Princess," had long elected to live with her father. It was Lavinia, the elder daughter (afterwards Mrs. Ryves), who took up the torch, and carried on the claim. This, as has been said, was the legacy of an eccentric mother. For fifty years, beginning as a young girl, she had brooded over it. Possibly enough, she now even believed in it. Certainly some people did, for the Duke of Cumberland's excursions into the paths of pleasure had long been common gossip. As the result of one of them, he had figured in an unsavoury *crim con* action; and another had involved him in an *affaire* with a prepossessing widow, Lady Anne Horton, daughter of the Earl of Carhampton, whom he had compromised to such an extent that her brother had compelled him to marry her at the point of a pistol. Since, according to Mrs. Ryves, the Duke had always acknowledged a previous marriage to her grandmother, Olive Wilmot, he was clearly committing bigamy in contracting this second union. It was strait-laced George III, she declared, who, "to avoid scandal," had insisted that his brother's first trip to the altar should be "hushed up." Hence, when it was known that the business was to be thrashed out before a jury, popular excitement was at fever pitch.

The *Court Journal* had an intriguing paragraph on the subject:

The extraordinary case of Mrs. Janetta Horton Ryves, who claims to be entitled to £15,000, left her by George III, "as a recompense for some trouble she may have experienced through her father, the late Duke of Cumberland," is shortly

to be tried by a special jury. Mrs. Ryves is now living in poverty, but some kind friends, who are assured of the justice of her claims, have subscribed some money to enable her to prosecute them. The marriage of her mother, Olive Wilmot (afterwards Mrs. Serres), with the Duke is attested on undoubted authority, and the legacy of George III is equally undoubted, but some years since the Prerogative Court of Canterbury refused probate, on the ground that there was no precedent in this country for proving a monarch's will. Eminent counsel are engaged, and the trial will excite no little interest.

Despite its name, the *Court Journal* was singularly misinformed; and the many inaccuracies in this paragraph were commented upon by numerous readers. Several of them pointed out that Mrs. Ryves claimed to be the granddaughter, not the daughter, of the Duke of Cumberland. Another blunder was in declaring that she had been left a legacy by George III, whereas, if he had left one to anybody, it was to her mother, Mrs. de Serres.

An "F.S.A., etc., " after deplored these slips, was, however, ready enough to accept the general conclusions.

Other documents under the Duke's hand [he wrote, to the *Gentleman's Magazine* (which had helped itself to the paragraph)] are in existence, recognising the legitimacy of Olive Serres, Princess of Cumberland. She maintained the rank to which she was entitled, and was entertained at the Guildhall Banquet, 9th of November, 1820, by the then Lord Mayor, Mr. Alderman Thorp, occupying one of the seats usually assigned to members of the Royal Family. Several other circumstances establishing her Royal rights took place, but these I need not recapitulate. The documents in evidence were inspected by His Majesty King William IV (then Duke of Clarence), and the late Duke of Sussex, who both testified to

their genuineness. . . . In conclusion, I may observe that, some years ago, I was personally acquainted with Mrs. Ryves, whose personal appearance decidedly favoured the presumption of her descent from the Royal Family, as so frequently alleged, and of which there can be no reasonable doubt.

Everybody, however, was not prepared to accept this view. "Had the paragraph," declared one angry reader, "appeared only in the fleeting columns of an insignificant newspaper, I should have treated it with indifference, but the *Gentleman's Magazine* is a work of authority for all time, and I therefore hasten to correct the statement."

Apart from other considerations, the projected action involved a very important collateral question. This was nothing less than the legitimacy of all the descendants of George III. According to Mrs. Ryves, His Majesty had himself contracted a bigamous union with Queen Charlotte. Naturally, enough, with such an issue to be settled, the case assumed a special importance. As a result, the hearing of it was conducted by the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Alexander Cockburn, with whom sat Baron Pollock and Sir James Wilde ; and a special jury were empanelled. Mrs. Ryves and her son William (who had been joined to the suit) were represented by Dr. Walter Smith and Mr. Morgan Thomas ; while the Attorney-General, who opposed, had "with him" the Solicitor-General, the Queen's Advocate and two others.

A distinguished company. Cockburn, who presided, had become Lord Chief Justice in 1859. He was specially fond of *causes célèbres*, and had been concerned with many. Thus, he had already appeared for Father Achilli in his libel action against Cardinal Newman ; he had conducted the prosecution

of Palmer, the Rugeley poisoner ; and he was afterwards to try Governor Eyre, the Tichborne Claimant, and Henry Wainwright. Roundell Palmer, then on the road to the Woolsack, was appointed Attorney-General in 1863, and Robert Collier, who had recently accepted the Solicitor-Generalship, was, like Phillimore, the Queen's Advocate, a future judge and a peer. His hobby was painting ; and, alone among the occupants of the Bench, he had exhibited at the Royal Academy.

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The start was tame enough, and without any thrills to gratify the expectant public. All that was done at the beginning was to prove the births and deaths of the various parties on whose documentary evidence rested the petitioners' case. As each of these individuals had long been dead, the fact that they had also been born was admitted without demur.

Dr. Smith, in his opening address, had a very remarkable story to put before the jury, as it contained particulars of three secret marriages, each contracted with persons of Royal blood. The real point, however, to be determined was if the Duke of Cumberland had contracted a valid marriage with Olive Wilmot. Naturally enough, the court at once pointed out that, if this were the case, it followed that her daughter, Mrs. de Serres, was a Royal Princess ; and that, as such, her subsequent marriage to Mr. de Serres, without the permission of the Sovereign, necessarily made Mrs. Ryves illegitimate. But, since she had already been declared legitimate, her mother could not have been a Princess.

Dr. Smith, airily remarking that "he would meet this difficulty when it arose," then continued his narrative.

The story began in the year 1749, when the Rev. Dr. Wilmot, a Warwickshire clergyman, was "privately married" to the Princess Poniatowsky, of Poland. Twelve months later, this distinguished union resulted in the birth of a daughter, Olive. In 1767, this daughter, at the age of seventeen, was "privately married" to Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, brother of George III. The marriage took place in London, at the house of Lord Archer, in Grosvenor Square, being solemnised by Dr. Wilmot, and witnessed by the Earl of Warwick, the Earl of Chatham, and Mr. Dunning, Solicitor-General to the King. The course of true love, however, ran so far from smoothly that, four years later, the husband, unmindful of his promises, "bigamously and publicly" went through a second matrimonial ceremony with Lady Ann Horton. To add to her domestic troubles, the deserted bride was at the moment "expecting." A girl child was born to her; and the baptismal certificate declared the infant's parents to be "the Duke of Cumberland and Olive his wife." "George III," added counsel, "for reasons of State, and to avert the penalties of bigamy from his brother, desired that the marriage with Olive Wilmot should not be known"; and, as a further precaution, "he directed that the infant should be re-baptised as the offspring of Robert Wilmot, brother of Dr. Wilmot."

Sir Roundell Palmer, the Attorney-General, put all his cards on the table at once.

"Of course," he said, "if this action could seriously be considered as an enquiry, it would be a very important one. The more statements we get of the description we have just had from the learned counsel representing the petitioner, the easier will be my task to demolish them. I am, however, bound

to tell your lordships that I shall treat this case as one of fraud, fabrication, and imposture from beginning to end. It is, however, comforting to reflect that the guilt of the fraud may be excused or palliated by the insanity of one of the persons concerned."

"I think," said Dr. Smith, "that it is somewhat premature for my learned friend to address the jury in such a strain." Then, having registered his protest, he delivered himself of a pronouncement that left everybody gasping :

"George III," he said, "before his marriage to Sophia Charlotte, was privately married to Hannah Lightfoot, a Quakeress."

"What on earth has that to do with your case?" demanded the shocked and astonished Lord Chief.

"It has a great deal to do with it," was the calm response. "Hannah Lightfoot, as head of—"

"One moment," interrupted Baron Pollock, "this must not be gone into. If it means anything at all, it means that George III was not married to Queen Charlotte, but to somebody else. It is really a great indecency on your part to enquire into matters affecting the Royal Family. If George III were married to somebody else before he married Queen Charlotte, then George IV had no right to the throne."

"Nor her present Majesty, Queen Victoria," added Sir Roundell. "I do not disguise from myself that this action is nothing less than a claim to the throne."

(5)

The mass of documents with which the petitioner had equipped her counsel covered a desk, and a large number of

F E M I N I N E F R A I L T Y

them were read in full. The first of the series was of special interest :

I hereby certify that I married Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, to Olive Wilmot, March 4, 1767; and that such marriage was legally solemnised according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England.

J. WILMOT.
GEORGE R.
CHATHAM.

Then, apparently to show that the union resulted in the fecundity that was demanded of it, there were put in two additional certificates :

Olive, the daughter of Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, and Olive, his lawful wife, born April 3, 1772, at Warwick.

and :

Parish of St. Mary's,
Warwick, 1772.

Privately baptised, April 3rd, Olive, the daughter of Henry Frederick Guelph, Duke of Cumberland, and Olive, his wife.

Witnesses : ROBERT WILMOT.
J. WILMOT.

Following this latter, came a memorandum :

G.R. April 4, 1772.

Whereas it is our Royal will that Olive, our niece, be re-baptised Olive Wilmot, to operate during our Royal pleasure.

To Lord Chatham.

As this was dated the day after the infant's birth, His Majesty had lost no time. That his wishes, too, were carried out with promptitude would appear to be shown by another document :

L A V I N I A R Y V E S

We hereby certify that Olive, the Duke of Cumberland's infant, was re-baptised, in order that she might pass as the child of my brother Robert Wilmot, and that such child was entered in the Register of St. Nicholas's at Warwick as Olive Wilmot only.

J. WILMOT.
ROBERT WILMOT.

Dr. Smith did not read all the 108 documents with which the petitioner had furnished him, but he did read as many of them as the court would allow. Among them was an oddly worded one, bearing the signature "George R." This was as follows :

We are hereby pleased to recommend Olive, our niece, to our faithful Lords and Commons, for protection and support, should she be in existence at the period of our Royal demise ; such being Olive Wilmot, the supposed daughter of Robert Wilmot, of Warwick.

A second memorandum, signed in the same august fashion, went into financial matters :

George R.

St. James's.

In case of our Royal demise, we give and bequeath to Olive, our brother of Cumberland's daughter, the sum of £15,000, commanding our heir and successor to pay the same privately to our said niece for her use, as a recompense for the misfortunes she may have had through her father.

Witnesses : J. DUNNING.
CHATHAM.
WARWICK.

June 2, 1774.

"You cannot be ignorant, Dr. Smith," observed Baron Pollock, "that, some years ago, all these documents were

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declared by Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons to be forgeries."

"Yes," was the calm response, "but Sir Robert talked a great deal of nonsense on that occasion."

With Dr. Smith, difficulties existed but to be overcome. He was not in the least upset by the fact that there were no living witnesses to any of the various documents on which he sought to establish his case. Thus, George III was in the family mausoleum at Windsor, and the Duke of Cumberland was in Westminster Abbey. Olive Wilmot had expired of a "broken heart" in France ; and Dr. Wilmot and his brother Robert, as well as Chatham, Dunning, Lord Warwick, and the Duke of Kent, had also long departed this life.

"On the death of Olive Wilmot," he continued, "her offspring was, in accordance with the directions of His Majesty, brought up as if she were the daughter of Dr. Wilmot's brother, Robert. At the age of nineteen, this girl married Thomas de Serres. The petitioner was her daughter Lavinia, now Mrs. Ryves, and was born in 1797."

"Then she is nearly seventy," remarked a juryman, with an air of solving an abstruse mathematical problem.

Agreeing with this calculation, Dr. Smith went on to observe that Mrs. de Serres and her daughter had moved in good society, being "taken up" by the Countess of Lonsdale, and visited by the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Kent. It was from the latter, he said (ignoring the theory of their ghostly origin) that Mrs. de Serres first received "proofs" that the Duke of Cumberland was her father.

The court could swallow a good deal, but this was a little too much. Pressed on the subject, Dr. Smith said that in 1819

the petitioner's mother had been given a "sealed packet" by Lord Warwick, containing the "facts." He was about to read a letter, from that individual, when Baron Pollock said that he must first show its admissibility. His manner of complying was such as to call down upon him a rebuke.

"What we want," said Cockburn severely, "is to know how you make a declaration from Lord Warwick to be evidence. I suppose your real object is to have the letter read to the jury. Making offensive answers to the court is not the best way to serve your purpose."

Having apologised for his breach of etiquette, counsel then read the letter :

Should this paper meet the eye of the Prince Regent, it is solemnly declared that Mrs. Olive de Serres is Princess Olive Cumberland, the only child of the late Duke of Cumberland, his first wife, whose marriage I witnessed, March 4th, 1767.

WARWICK.

London, *April 4, 1816.*

The Lord Chief Justice and his colleagues appeared quite unimpressed by this remarkable collection of documents. All of them, it was again pointed out, had already been declared in the House of Commons to be forgeries. Dr. Smith protested that such a verdict was wrong. "They cannot be forgeries," he said, "because nobody would be so clumsy as to commit an error in respect of dates and titles."

"Happily for the interests of justice," riposted the Lord Chief, "it very often does happen that forgeries are executed in a clumsy fashion."

But Dr. Smith would not have this. He would not even admit that "George Guelph" (which was the fashion in which the King

had signed what purported to be a certificate of his marriage to Hannah Lightfoot) was something of an innovation in Royal signatures. Nor could he tell the court why Pitt had signed various documents as "Chatham," and Lord Brooke as "Warwick" before they had succeeded to the Peerage. He put a handwriting expert into the box, to bear him out in his views that the signatures were genuine. It was not a happy choice, as this gentleman, Mr. Nethercliff, would only say that those of Dr. Wilmot and G.R. were acceptable.

The court was very patient, but the prolixity of Dr. Smith imposed a severe test upon it.

"We have already had all this from you," observed Baron Pollock at last. "Cannot you be satisfied, without giving it to us over and over again? We really must consider the time of the jury."

The petitioner's solicitor made great play by proving what nobody had ever questioned—viz., that the Rev. Dr. Wilmot was in priest's orders. When, however, he wanted to read a passage from a biography, Baron Pollock refused to hear him.

"A printed paper," he declared, "is not evidence of anything."

In supporting this view, the Attorney-General quoted the decision of an old-time judge who had once declared that "a lousy little history" could not be accepted. Thereupon, Dr. Smith dropped the subject, and produced from his apparently inexhaustible stock the death and burial certificates of Lord Chatham.

"We may take it," said Mr. Attorney, with heavy sarcasm, "that the noble Earl, having been buried in 1778, has not been alive for some time."

L A V I N I A R Y V E S

The next "breeze" arose over counsel's request for permission to exhibit a portrait of Mrs. de Serres.

"A portrait is not evidence," he was told.

"As this one will prove the strong likeness of my client to the Royal Family," said Dr. Smith, "it is at any rate moral evidence."

"So far as I can see," returned Baron Pollock, "your case has very little morality about it."

Dr. Smith bided his time, and waited until the luncheon interval. Then, during the absence of their lordships, he had the covering removed from the picture. Learning from the usher what had happened, the Attorney-General rushed back into court, and gave peremptory instructions that the jury were not to look at it.

(6)

When the hearing was resumed, Dr. Smith called the petitioner herself. As she stepped into the box, everybody looked at her expectantly. Mrs. Ryves, however, was not in the least embarrassed by the stares and whispers that her appearance aroused. Having curtsied to the bench, and then to the usher, she paid a similar compliment to the reporters. One of them gives his impressions of her in this fashion :

The petitioner is a little old lady now getting on for seventy. She is still equipped with all her faculties, and speaks in a clear distinct voice. Her memory is good, and her disposition is very brisk. In her youth she must have been gifted with considerable charms. She certainly bears a strong resemblance to the Royal Family.

Almost as soon as his client had been sworn, Dr. Smith returned to forbidden ground by producing two "certificates," which he said dealt with the marriage of George III to Hannah Lightfoot. Instantly he was pulled up very sharply—he would be daring enough to drag in the name of Lady Sarah Lennox as well.

"So far as I understand you," said the Lord Chief Justice in a shocked voice, "we are asked solemnly to pronounce, on the strength of two certificates, coming I know not whence, and written on mere scraps of paper, that the marriage between His Majesty and Queen Charlotte was an invalid one. Consequently, all the sovereigns who have since sat on the throne, including her present Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, have not been entitled to sit there. That is what the court is asked to say on the strength of these two rubbishy bits of paper. One of them is signed 'George R.', and the other is signed 'George Guelph.' I believe them to be gross and rank forgeries."

"I wish," said Baron Pollock, "to express my entire concurrence in the opinion of my Lord Chief Justice."

"I agree," remarked Sir James Wilde, the other member of the trio. "In my opinion, all these documents are nothing but very foolish forgeries."

"It is my profound conviction," went on Sir Alexander Cockburn, "that the 'J. Wilmot' signatures on these various documents are also forgeries."

Any evidence as to this mysterious matrimonial essay of George III being thus ruled out, the petitioner was examined as to other matters. According to her own story, she had always moved in "high society." Thus, the Countess of Lonsdale had presented her to the Prince Regent; and she had been

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on terms of intimacy with his brother the Duke of Kent. It was from him, she said, that she had learned her real name and rank, and that the “proofs” were in the custody of Lord Warwick. When her mother asked him for them, he had said that he was “too poverty stricken” to fetch them from Warwick Castle, unless the cost of a post-chaise were advanced him. This was obviously done, as he had written his benefactress a letter on the subject :

Headquarters at W. Castle.

MADAM,—All goes well. I have got safe your papers. My poor old housekeeper wept for joy at seeing me. What the nefarious town will say to my being here, I am at a loss to conceive. I write to relieve your mind, so bear up.

Ever yours sincerely,
WARWICK.

“Shortly afterwards,” continued the witness, “the Duke of Kent and Lord Warwick called at my mother’s house. Lord Warwick brought with him a packet of papers. There were three distinct sets of them. One had been in his custody ; a second in that of Dr. Wilmot ; and the third in that of Lord Chatham. The papers, which established my identity as the granddaughter of the Duke of Cumberland, were read by the Duke of Kent.”

“And what did the Duke say about it ? ”

“He said that the signatures of George III on them were his father’s. He also said to my mother, ‘You are my cousin, the Princess Olive of Cumberland.’ ”

To make it quite clear that the finances of Lord Warwick were at a low ebb, another letter which he had written to the accommodating Mrs. de Serres was then put in by Dr. Smith :

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I endure more than I can express, when I reflect upon the misfortune I have plunged you into by my not being able to repay any part of the money you so generously assisted me with ; to-day I cannot command a single shilling ; and it is in vain that I have entreated Lady W—— to lend me 5s.

But the petitioner's evidence was full of unexpected disclosures.

"I am sure," she said in one part, "that Dr. Wilmot was the author of the *Letters of Junius*. He stopped writing them when the King promised to act conscientiously."

"If," observed the Lord Chief Justice, "you could show us anything that establishes this beyond doubt, a long-standing mystery would at once be cleared up."

The sally, falling from such distinguished lips, inevitably attracted "laughter in court." As the case progressed, there was a good deal of it, for in the 'sixties, as now, the flights of judicial humour were not very lofty. Here is another specimen with which the listeners were regaled.

Baron Pollock : "That is not where the shoe pinches."

Dr. Smith : "There are two shoes here, my lord." (A laugh.)

Baron Pollock : "You are quite right, *c'est tout autre chose*."
(Loud laughter.)

(7)

During her cross-examination Mrs. Ryves made some further remarkable disclosures. Thus, she declared that the Duke of Kent, notwithstanding that he was practically a bankrupt, had allowed her £400 a year from his own purse "to keep up her position." Forgetting, too, the non-supernatural origin she had already given them, she now repeated the odd tale of

the “proofs” of her ancestry coming from another world, via the mediumship of Lord Warwick’s dead father. In a letter on the subject to the deceased nobleman’s son, Mrs. de Serres said that one afternoon, when the curate of St. Margaret’s, Westminster, was having a cup of tea with her, there was a knock at the drawing-room door. On opening it, the unsuspecting lady saw his lordship’s “ghost,” who looked kindly at her, and moved his lips as if anxious to speak. The result of this alarming experience was that “her blood froze with terror, and she fell into convulsions.”

A vigorous old lady, Mrs. Ryves, for all her seventy years and long continued struggles with an unsympathetic world. Thus, when, after standing some hours in the box, it was suggested that she should have a chair, the offer was refused.

“Thank you,” she said, with spirit, “but I am not at all tired of standing up. In fact, I never could be tired of standing up to establish the honour of my family.”

Nor could anything disturb her equanimity, and she met the most vigorous attacks of the Attorney-General as if they were meant for somebody else. The great Sir Roundell Palmer, accustomed to overawing recalcitrant witnesses, lost his temper, and very nearly gave her up as a bad job.

“I have done with these documents, madam,” he said grimly, “but not with you.”

“I am very glad to hear it.”

“Was this certificate, declaring your grandmother a Protestant princess, intended to establish her right of succession to the throne?”

“Not at all. It was intended to show that she was what I am—an English lady and a Protestant.”

"In 1817," continued the other, "Mrs. de Serres publicly declared that Dr. Wilmot had died unmarried. Yet, according to you, he was the husband of a Polish princess, and the father of your grandmother. How do you account for that, madam?"

"I do not account for it."

Thinking to extract the information in another fashion, Sir Roundell then read a letter which Mrs. de Serres had written to the Prince Regent. In this, dated 1817, she begged him "to consider the situation of your late uncle's natural daughter in London, who in every trial has maintained her sexual dignity."

"I can explain that," volunteered Mrs. Ryves. "Both my mother and the Duke of Kent thought that, under the Royal Marriages Act, she might possibly be illegitimate."

"And do you imagine the jury will believe that?"

"Yes, I do."

"Do you also think," enquired the Attorney-General, referring to another set of papers, "that Mr. Bell invented these?"

"Very probably he did," was the tranquil response. "You must remember that Mr. Bell was an Irishman, and Irish people are very apt to invent things."

"Now, about Hannah Lightfoot?" said the Lord Chief, returning of his own accord to a subject he had already declared inadmissible. "You have told us that the Duke of Kent saw the certificate of her marriage to his brother, the King. What did he say?"

"He said he did not like it. Still, he acknowledged it."

The next piece of "evidence" was a "Memorial" which Mrs. de Serres had forwarded to George III in 1820. Although this

had been drawn up for her by Mr. Bell, "a genealogical barrister," it contained some odd errors of fact. Thus, it declared that Olive Wilmot's marriage to the Duke of Cumberland was by banns, and also gave the wrong name of an alleged witness. The orthography, too, was as curious as the "genealogy," and the Prince of Wales was specifically described as the "offspring of heaven's smile."

H.R.H. had been called many things, but nobody had ever called him this.

(8)

The case, which had lasted six days, was now rapidly drawing to an end. It only remained for the Attorney-General to reply. His heavy guns were not wanted. Still, he called up some of them. "Rank and audacious imposture, and thoroughly fraudulent from start to finish," were among the mildest terms he employed in examining the petitioner's attempt to establish herself as a member of the Royal Family. What this attempt was founded on, he said, was the assumption that George III, Chatham, Dunning, Lord Warwick, and the Duke of Kent had all conspired together to suppress a marriage bigamously contracted by a Prince of the Blood.

The Rev. Dr. Wilmot, whose signature was on several of the certificates, appeared, said Sir Roundell, to have had a curious partiality for clandestine unions, and also a gift for persuading Royal personages to follow his example. Thus, as a bridegroom, he himself had been "secretly married"; as a clergyman, he had conducted the "secret marriage" of his daughter Olive; and in a similar capacity he had also officiated at the "secret marriage" of George III to Hannah Lightfoot.

"Was there any jury in the world," demanded the Attorney-General, "who would believe such a preposterous story for one moment? It was Mrs. de Serres," he declared, "who had forged these absurd documents, the most ridiculous and preposterous ones that perverted ingenuity had ever conceived."

He was proceeding in a similar strain to demolish the rest of the superstructure so carefully built up by Dr. Smith, when there was a sudden and dramatic interruption.

"I am commissioned by my brother jurors," announced the foreman, "to say that we have already decided as to the genuineness of these documents."

"You think they are spurious?" he was asked by the court.
"Yes, my lord, we do."

"You only share," said Sir Alexander Cockburn, "the opinion on the subject which my learned brothers and myself have entertained for a long time. In fact, we consider that every one of these documents is a palpable forgery."

"I think it right to say," put in a juryman, "that we took this view as soon as we looked at them."

Despite this strong hint as to the hopelessness of his case, Dr. Smith asked leave to address the jury. It was granted, but in grudging fashion. Almost at once, however, he got into trouble.

"I have carefully examined the various documents entrusted me by the petitioner," he began, "and on my honour I am prepared to——"

"Stop!" interrupted the Lord Chief severely. "That sentence is not to be completed. Such language violates a fundamental axiom of the legal profession. No counsel has any right whatever to pledge his honour to anything in his brief."

"I thank your lordship for correcting me," returned the other. "Still," he added to the jury, "it is impossible to impugn these documents, as, if they were not genuine, they would be the most imbecile forgeries imaginable. You must give more attention to a comparison of them. This is my right and it is also your privilege as members of a free country."

Cockburn's summing-up was very short, and not particularly suave. Several of the documents, he said, "outraged probability," and most of the others were "full of inconsistencies." The mere fact that the blood of the Duke of Cumberland ran in the veins of Mrs. de Serres (which, he admitted, was possible) made neither herself nor Mrs. Ryves a Princess. The issues put to the jury (who, without leaving the box, returned a verdict in the negative) were: (1) Was the petitioner's mother the legitimate daughter of the Duke of Cumberland? and (2) Was the Duke of Cumberland lawfully married to Olive Wilmot on March 24th, 1767?

Considering the evidence that had been offered them, no other verdict could have been expected. Still, his reputation being what it was, there was just a chance that the Duke of Cumberland's marriage to Olive Wilmot would have been accepted. A morsel, however, that no jury could swallow was the letter in which the Duke of Kent was positively declared to have appointed Mrs. de Serres as guardian of the future Queen Victoria. There were limits to human credulity. This was one of them.

Thus ended a *cause célèbre* which the Attorney-General had well described as "founded on a tissue of fraud, fabrication, and forgery, and for which the only possible excuse is to be discovered in insanity."

(9)

Considering the issues involved, there was not much newspaper comment. A Sunday organ, however, appealing to the proletariat, was very indignant that the threatened "revelations" about Hannah Lightfoot had been suppressed. "This attitude," declared an angry editorial, "shows an unbecoming subserviency on the part of our judges to all connected with rank and royalty."

Mrs. Ryves had her own opinion of the verdict; and she set it forth at some length in a vindictory (and anonymous) pamphlet, *Was Justice Done?* On the whole, she thought it was not. But the curtain having fallen on a drama which most people considered had already run far too long, the brochure fizzled out like a damp squib.

The year 1871 saw the last of the would-be "Princess Lavinia." She died in a suburban villa at Haverstock Hill, to which district she had retired, leaving two sons and three daughters to carry on the "claim."

None of them thought it worth while.

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(1)

ADVENTURES are to the adventuresses. Given only a plausible enough tongue, a knowledge of the world, and some dexterity in emerging from awkward situations, and it would appear a simple matter to live at the expense of other people.

Conspicuous among the women who will always stand out as adventuresses of this description was one who, during the winter of 1897, arrived at St. Moritz, where she took up her quarters at the best hotel. As she had come with letters of introduction describing her as the Hon. Eva Fox-Strangways (and thus belonging to the family of the Earl of Ilchester) and was also understood to be engaged in literary pursuits, the other English visitors were much impressed. They found her pleasant, and affable ; and, so far as her health would allow, fully prepared to join in the social life of the hotel. Altogether, she was regarded as an "acquisition."

"In voice and manner," writes Mrs. Aubrey le Blond, who happened to be stopping with her in the hotel, "she was a lady. In intelligence she was brilliant ; in health it appeared as if her nerves, rather than her lungs, had gone wrong. Her age seemed to be about twenty-five. In a short time she knew everyone worth knowing in the place, but retained a certain aloofness, chumming up with no one and having her meals alone in the restaurant. We accounted for this by supposing

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that much of her time was being given up to the novel she was writing."

But an unexpected disillusionment was to come, for (adds Mrs. le Blond in her interesting volume of memoirs, *Day In, Day Out*) "when the season was over and everyone leaving, she drew a large sum of money from the local bank and never returned to Switzerland. Her cheque was not honoured, but the St. Moritz banker whom I spoke to on a later visit to the place said it would have been useless, as well as very costly, to follow up the matter in another country.

"... I confess that while from time to time I had doubts with regard to her integrity, I had none as to her reputed origin. It was not merely that she avoided the pitfalls of a middle-class upbringing. It was something far more subtle. Not an inflection of her voice was wrong. Not a movement of her body was other than dignified as she swept through the hall of the Kulm to dinner. She dressed quietly, and not too well. Her clothes were exactly right for the part she played."

Well, it is easy to be wise after the event.

The real story of this unwelcome visitor, as afterwards disentangled from the mass of subterfuge with which she enveloped it, supplied very different reading. Thus, instead of her birthplace being the ancestral halls of the Ilchester family, it had been somewhere much more humble. As a matter of fact, it had been a public house at Bridport. Her real name, too, was not Eva Fox-Strangways, but Henrietta Strangway, and her father was an ex-bluejacket, who had joined the coastguard and settled down in Dorsetshire. The girl, being clever, had done well at the village school, and, winning a scholarship, had gone to Girton. Mixing there with

her social superiors filled her with a desire to better her position. Accordingly, when she left Girton, she carried out a plan she had long matured.

The first step was to cut herself off from her somewhat obscure family ; the next one was to ally herself with another and more aristocratic one. As a preliminary, she added an S to her name, and prefixed it with a Fox. She also dropped the Henrietta which had been bestowed upon her by her god-parents, and, from Henrietta Strangway, blossomed into the Hon. Eva Fox-Strangways. The natural effect of this metamorphosis was to give people who did not know her real origin the impression that she belonged to the family of Lord Ilchester.

With this equipment she set out to traverse the path that was to lead her into the troublous waters by which she was eventually to be engulfed.

(2)

Miss Fox-Strangways (as she persisted in calling herself) felt that London offered the most suitable field for her special gifts. Accordingly she went there ; and, being possessed of a ready pen and a particularly vivid imagination, "took up" journalism. The choice was not a bad one ; and, on the strength of her supposititious connection with the Ilchester family (with any members of which she was careful to avoid coming into actual contact), she managed to get a few articles published. Posing as a traveller and explorer, she also delivered lectures to various gatherings. The result was, she met a number of people of more or less consequence. They all appear to have accepted her at her own valuation. This was somewhat lofty.

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Her sojourn in London, however, was not prolonged. With a stack of introductions and such money as she could induce a speculative publisher to advance for a novel she proposed to write, she left England and went abroad. Somewhere about the year 1897 her wanderings took her to St. Moritz. It was there that occurred the episode of the dishonoured cheque.

After leaving Switzerland in the abrupt fashion that this business necessitated, she considered it advisable to go as far afield as possible. The country she selected for the purpose was Australia. In Melbourne she established "contact" with a wealthy squatter, to whom, according to her own account, she became engaged. This, however, was looking some distance ahead, for the amorous pastoralist happened to be a married man. None the less, he settled £500 a month on her, and with this sample of Colonial generosity she left Australia for Canada.

The move was a strategical error, for, during her absence, the Melbourne Lothario proved fickle and transferred his affections to a rival. Not only did he do this, but he also cut down by one half the allowance he had been making. Thereupon, the Montreal lawyers whom she consulted (but without telling them that her alleged fiancé already had a wife) suggested an action for breach of promise. Thinking, however, that a personal interview would have a better result, she took a trip back to Melbourne.

But the expedition proved a fiasco. "The gentleman," she wrote, "declined to have anything more to do with me because he was seriously annoyed at the threats of my Montreal lawyers."

With her hopes shattered, and her pockets empty (for even

the reduced allowance had now been stopped altogether), the angry lady returned to Canada. But, if she had very little cash, she had plenty of assurance. Thus, she put up at the best hotel in Montreal, where she registered herself as "Miss Eva Fox-Strangways of Melbourne, Australia."

"Of course, I am really an 'honourable,'" she said, "because my father is the Earl of Ilchester."

That she could not have had any such prefix, even if she really were the daughter of an earl, was apparently unknown to the hotel manager. Had she elected to call herself a countess, he would have probably accepted her as such.

Credit is as good as cash ; and, as the new arrival had brought letters of introduction with her, she was not seriously inconvenienced by a lack of ready money. One of her letters was to Sir William Van Horne, Chairman of the Canadian Pacific. He was in England at the time, but his name was one with which to conjure, and she found the mere mention of it enough to make the Montreal shops only too anxious to supply her with anything she wanted. She wanted a great many things. As for payment, such a sordid matter was not even discussed by them.

"Pray don't think of it, madam," they said, when she flourished her cheque-book.

She did not think of it.

Still nobody, however clever, can live on credit indefinitely. The time came when the shopmen abandoned their attitude of obsequiousness and forwarded their accounts, and the hotel manager also hinted that her bill for board and lodging should be settled. To him she made many promises and many excuses. When these failed to mollify him, she adopted another tone.

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"My friend, Sir William Van Horne, will be very annoyed that you should bother me in this fashion," she declared. "I shall speak to him as soon as possible."

"He arrives from England to-morrow," was the unexpected response.

"Then I will see him," said the angry lady, "as soon as he comes ashore."

But she did not see him. Carefully avoiding any such possibility, she left Montreal in surreptitious fashion, and travelled to New York. There she put up at the Manhattan. It was an unlucky choice, for somebody connected with the Montreal hotel happened to arrive soon afterwards, and mentioned that a Miss Fox-Strangways had gone off without paying her bill.

"That's odd," said the reception-clerk, "because we have an English guest of the same name stopping here now. We understand that she's the daughter of an English lord. I'll bring her along to have a talk with you presently."

The suggested "talk," however, did not materialise.

In some uncanny fashion the "Hon. Eva" got wind of what was in store for her. As she had no desire to meet anybody from Montreal, she left New York that afternoon, and without going through the formality of announcing her departure. A boat happened to be leaving for England, and she travelled by it.

(3)

On arriving in London in the summer of 1903, she developed from an amateur into a professional adventuress. Her programme as such, which was deliberately planned, followed the

established one of all other practitioners. There was no originality whatever about it. Putting up at a fashionable hotel, just off Grosvenor Square, she registered herself as a daughter of the Earl of Ilchester ; and as such obtained quantities of goods from confiding tradesmen. Dressmakers, furriers, and jewellers, etc., were all laid under contribution. Apparently she exerted an hypnotic effect on them, for they permitted her to run up accounts, or else readily accepted her assurance that cash would be forthcoming "on delivery." As it happened, the cash was forthcoming, but it was forthcoming from the hotel manager.

"I am expecting some parcels," she would airily remark to that impressed individual. "Just pay for them when they arrive, and put it down on my bill."

When the bill was submitted at the end of the week, she drew a cheque for £100. The cashier accepted it without demur, and handed her the change. But, despite its aristocratic signature, the cheque was not met by the bank on which it was drawn. Before, however, she could be asked for an explanation, the "Hon. Eva" had left the hotel, and was practising similar frauds elsewhere.

The success with which she met was astonishing. It almost appeared as if people were asking to be swindled. Still, she was clever enough to vary her story to suit its ever-shifting circle of recipients. Thus, she was in turn a lecturer, a journalist, a playwright, a novelist, and a wealthy heiress travelling for pleasure. Of these claims, the one to be considered a journalist was not so far fetched as some of the others, since she really had written a few travel articles in an obscure magazine.

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Among the establishments to receive her “patronage” was a Matlock hydropathic. There she represented herself as an “heiress,” a landowner, and an authoress. The combination, added to her “title,” was irresistible ; and, when she hinted that she was temporarily embarrassed, on account of the sale of one of her estates not being completed, the other visitors begged to be given the opportunity of assisting her. They were given the opportunity. It was all they were given.

That she avoided getting into the hands of the police was due more to good luck than to good management, for she took next to no precautions, and all her swindles were carried out in the same elementary fashion. It would appear, however, that she had some sixth sense to warn her when danger threatened. Thus, after a series of profitable visits to Birmingham and Manchester, she discovered that a trade protection society was exhibiting a close interest in her movements. Accordingly, she resolved to return to America. As, however, it was against her principles to pay for anything, she embarked at Liverpool without a ticket. When the purser asked her for one, she, following her customary practice, offered him a cheque. To her indignation, he refused to accept it, and said that, if the passage-money were not forthcoming in coin of the realm, she would be put ashore at Queenstown.

This is undoubtedly what would have happened, but for the intervention of a wealthy American with whom she had struck up a casual acquaintance in the saloon. So impressed was he by her manner that he begged permission to cash her cheque. Permission was granted.

(4)

It was in the spring of 1904 that she landed in New York. Registering herself in the old familiar fashion as the "Honourable Eva Fox-Strangways, daughter of the Earl of Ilchester," and exhibiting the family crest, with three foxes and the motto *Faire sans Dire* complete, she put up at the Waldorf Astoria. After she had been there some time, however, the manager of that establishment felt that all was not quite as it should be, and tactfully suggested that she would be more comfortable elsewhere. Acting on the hint thus given her, she left the Waldorf and moved to a succession of other hotels, among which were the Holland House, the Savoy, and the Park Avenue.

At first the problem of getting hold of enough ready money with which to meet absolutely unavoidable demands was met by the simple expedient of pawning goods that had been obtained on credit. But this method could not be prolonged indefinitely ; and it was with a view to staving off a financial crisis that she inserted an advertisement in the columns of the *Herald* :

Young and charming English lady, with brilliant prospects and moving in the best circles, requires temporary assistance.
—Write X.Y.Z., care of this paper.

The response, however, was so unsatisfactory that she had to hit on another scheme. This time she had better luck. Representing herself as having a substantial income, and to be merely travelling for "pleasure," she wrote to an influential business

man, saying that she wished to turn her gifts to practical account. Such an ambition was regarded as so commendable that the Board of Education appointed her one of their official lecturers.

The fees derived from this source were not large, but the post had the advantage of bringing her into contact with "useful" people. She must have impressed them with her glib talk of Drawing-rooms at Buckingham Palace and dinner-parties at Marlborough House, and of the Royal Enclosure at Ascot and the lawns at Cowes, for she had no difficulty in borrowing money from her listeners. She repaid these loans, certainly. As was her custom, she repaid them by cheques, which, since they were drawn on the Bank of England, were accepted without demur. It was not until they were presented that their recipients demurred. By that time, however, it was too late, for their drawer had disappeared.

Thinking it as well to put the best part of a thousand miles between herself and New York, the "Hon. Eva" went next to Chicago. She arrived there with fifteen trunks, a still unexhausted cheque-book, and numerous letters of introduction from people of position in England. One of these introductions described her as a "near relative of the Earl of Ilchester," and another as a famous London journalist and former editor of the *Academy*. "Thus equipped, everything was plain sailing. The most exclusive circles were thrown open to her ; she was begged to accept membership of the principal women's clubs ; she figured as a guest of honour at scores of social functions ; and, finally, when a globe-trotting Italian duke visited the stockyards, she served on the reception-committee.

Yet, notwithstanding these triumphs, in Chicago, as elsewhere, the "Hon Eva" had her pecuniary worries. But they seldom troubled her long, for she contrived to borrow fairly large sums, and often from the most unlikely sources. Her powers of persuasion in this direction were really astonishing. She is even said to have loosened the purse-strings of Andrew Carnegie himself. This, however, is uncorroborated. Still, if the Pittsburg millionaire was coy, others were malleable enough; and shrewd business men and financial magnates, together with hard-headed editors and publishers, all succumbed to her wiles. The Chicago tradesmen, too, were either singularly trusting or else (and as had happened in London) the effect of her "title" was hypnotic, for she was permitted to open accounts at a number of the principal stores. From these she obtained quantities of expensive goods as well as a luxurious car.

At one period during her sojourn in Chicago, her name was coupled with that of the son of a millionaire; and a report spread that the wedding-bells would soon be heard. The young man's parents, however, interfered, and shipped him off to Europe. This was a rebuff. Its recipient met it in characteristic fashion by leaving Chicago. She also left thirteen trunks behind her. As they merely contained books and newspapers, they were not regarded by the manager of the Auditorium, where she had lived in considerable luxury, as much to set off the hotel bill she had neglected to discharge.

The last town visited by the "Hon. Eva" during her Odyssey in the United States was Philadelphia. It was there that she finally disappeared, her departure being precipitated by the setting on foot of embarrassing enquiries as to her address.

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These enquiries were at the instance of various shops with whom she had run up substantial accounts for goods supplied. Following her customary practice, she had paid these bills by cheques. The cheques, however, had been dishonoured. As a result, she was "wanted," not only in Philadelphia, but also in New York, Boston, and Chicago, and a dozen other cities where she had left behind her a trail of unredeemed, worthless promises.

The episode caused so much stir that, before long, repercussions of it found their way across the Atlantic. In the summer of 1907 a London journal published a guarded message on the subject from its New York correspondent :

The police here are busy looking for a young English-woman who is said to belong to a well-known titled family ; and who, owing to her aristocratic bearing and charm of manner, has been received without question by the most exclusive society in New York and other cities. The police interest in her movements is occasioned by the fact that she has suddenly disappeared from Philadelphia, leaving large debts on account of hotel bills, borrowed money, and goods supplied by leading shops. A considerable sum is thus involved.

(5)

Having made America too hot to hold her, the fugitive went to Canada. The police of New York and Philadelphia, discovering the particular town for which she had booked, got into touch with their *confrères* in Toronto. Enquiries were at once set on foot, but a careful search of the hotel registers failed to reveal the presence of any such individual as the

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“Hon. Eva Fox-Strangways.” This, however, was not really surprising, for she had gone to an obscure boarding-house, where she called herself “Miss Margaret Sinclair,” and said she had come from Edinburgh.

If she had kept quiet, it is probable that she would have been safe enough in Canada. But she could not keep quiet. Her habit of boasting was to prove her undoing. While living in the Toronto boarding-house, she talked incessantly of her aristocratic relatives in England and of her “society” friends in Philadelphia ; and of her travels and lectures and literary work. The result was, when a local journal reprinted from an American one an account of the adventures of a certain “Miss Fox-Strangways,” the other boarders felt that some of the facts fitted in with the account that “Miss Margaret Sinclair” had given them of herself. One of their number felt this so strongly that he went to the police ; and the police went to the boarding-house, taking with them a warrant issued by a magistrate.

“Are you Eva Fox-Strangways ?” enquired a detective on being shown into her room.

“I don’t know what you mean,” was the haughty response.
“I am Miss Margaret Sinclair.”

“Then you’re the person we want,” returned the other.
“Also, quite a number of people want you in New York, Boston, Chicago, and Philadelphia.”

“This is an outrage !”

“Sorry you should think that, but you must consider yourself under arrest. We are detective officers, and we are acting on a warrant. We must also ask you to let us examine your trunks while we are here.”

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Perhaps it was as well that the police arrived when they did, for their captive was already at the end of her tether. Her sole resources, indeed, consisted of one penny and a couple of dresses. Nor did an examination of her trunks reveal anything of value. All that was found in them were a number of visiting-cards ; several bundles of counterfoils of dishonoured cheques, stacks of pawn-tickets and unpaid bills ; and the manuscript of a novel she had written. This last bore the suggestive title, *Adventures of a Woman in Search of Happiness*.

Invited to make a statement to the Toronto police commissioner, she was disarmingly frank.

"I am not really responsible for what has happened," she said to that official. "The truth is, my actions were forced upon me by the crowd of wealthy snobs who took me to their bosoms just because they believed that my father was an English earl. When I showed them my name in *Debrett's Peerage* they simply overwhelmed me with attentions. I was asked everywhere. I was compelled to live in style, in order to keep up my position."

"Well, the charge against you is swindling."

"And I have a perfect answer to it. Swindling, indeed ! What on earth will people be saying about me next ?"

A good deal was said. Most of it was said by the Toronto newspapers, which filled columns with imaginative descriptions of her exploits and her personality. "On being arrested," declared one such report, "Miss Sinclair accepted her fate without a murmur. When they called at the house where she lived, the detectives found themselves confronted by a quiet-mannered woman, garbed in sombre modesty, and thus presenting a very different appearance from the dashing,

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fascinating, fashionably-gowned siren that the U.S. police despatches had led them to expect. Miss Sinclair is about thirty-six years of age, of medium height and build, and possesses a luxuriant crop of auburn hair. Claiming to be a daughter of the Earl of Ilchester, the distinguished English aristocrat, she has travelled round the world, and is well known as a prominent journalist, author, playwright, and lecturer."

Her complex for deception was such that she even lied to her attorney, to whom she always insisted that she was a widow. "Mrs. Strangways," so this somewhat credulous individual told a reporter, "was of noble lineage, and held the rank of countess in England. She must be regarded as the victim of circumstances."

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Thinking, apparently, that she would make a better impression on an American jury than on a Canadian one, she did not resist extradition. As a result she was sent to New York. There, much to her indignation, her finger-prints were registered, and she also had to submit to being photographed. The next morning she appeared before a magistrate, to answer a charge of "grand larceny."

The personal appearance of the accused woman struck different observers differently. Thus, one reporter described her as "A well built, attractive-looking brunette, with alluring eyes, a typically aristocratic air, and a self-possessed manner"; and a second declared, "By no stretch of imagination can she be considered beautiful. She is nothing but a timid little woman, with a bad colouring, and very commonplace features."

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"It is all a terrible misunderstanding," she protested, when invited to answer the charge upon which she was arraigned. "The firms from whom I got these things were glad enough to accept my cheques. Of course, I quite thought they would be settled."

"And who was to settle them?" enquired the magistrate.

"The Bank of England, of course."

"Even if, as appears to be the case, you had no account there?"

"Certainly. They were Bank of England cheques. What more could anyone want?"

After this original theory of finance, the accused was committed for trial at the forthcoming sessions. The magistrate, however, offered to release her from custody if she would give a bond for a thousand dollars. As she could not do this, she was sent to the Tombs Prison. From that gloomy fastness she issued a "statement." Among its florid passages were the following :

All my troubles have been caused by social ambition. Directly I arrived in America I found myself in the midst of a society whirl that took my breath away. As a result, I was compelled to live extravagantly. To do anything else was impossible. It is on this account that the newspapers have rended my character, and have dubbed me an "adventuress." Yet my conscience is clear. From first to last, I uttered no falsehood, nor did I ever misrepresent myself. My title to the honoured name of Fox-Strangways is clear and untarnished, and I really am a direct descendant of that noble family.

. . . In the eyes of the law I may, perhaps, have sinned. But, if so, I sinned unwittingly. I have, however, been sorely tried where I trusted. During my career in this country I have met pleasant people, who have said much and promised much. Yet, just because I appealed to their purses, they have forgotten all about me.

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The American practice being very different from the English one, the prisoner, while awaiting trial, was interviewed by reporters. Acting on their suggestion, she wrote out a "defence" of the conduct with which she was charged. It was a curious document, but it made such good "copy" that long excerpts from it were published :

Is there anybody in the wide, wide world silly enough to believe that an hotel manager would cash a cheque for a woman who was a stranger to him merely because she said that her father was an English earl ! It sounds incredible ; yet it has happened to me repeatedly. When I had money, I spent a great deal. When I did not have any, the hotels had to wait. There was nothing else for them to do.

I have been asked why I disappeared so suddenly. Well, when I understood that I had done something that was not considered strictly legal—I do not remember just what it was, but I fancy it was giving a wrong cheque—I was living in Philadelphia. A lawyer whom I consulted there said I had better leave the country. Thinking his advice was correct, I went to Canada, and took a room in a boarding-house at Toronto. Until then I had no suspicion that the smallest cloud rested on my name, or that I was being held up to cruel and merciless calumnies in the American journals. I blush for them.

One morning my Toronto landlady came to my room, and said that two detectives had called and were asking for me. Over what followed I must draw a veil. It is all too terrible. The horror of it will haunt me to my dying day. Just think of it. I, a weak, wretched, friendless woman, was taken into custody by two big Scotsmen. What a horrible situation !

At the City Hall the charge was read, and I was told of the dreadful newspaper stories that had been printed about me. As I am highly strung, I collapsed utterly, and had to be removed to the prison infirmary for medical treatment. When

I recovered from the shock, the governor said that I could resist extradition to America. I refused, and volunteered to go back to New York and clear my honour. As a result I was handed over to a detective, who brought me here.

I wish it to be distinctly understood that neither by word nor deed have I ever claimed relationship with anybody. Nor have I ever described myself as being other than I am—that is, a professional journalist and lecturer. I have not willingly deceived anybody, and I have not obtained introductions fraudulently. Such people as I have met have been thrown across my path by Fate. I pray Heaven that this terrible publicity will not cause them annoyance.

There was a good deal more—several columns more—in a similar strain.

If legal procedure in America can be slow, it can also be swift. It was certainly swift in this instance, for the trial took place at the New York General Sessions a month after the preliminary hearing. In the indictment the accused woman was referred to as “Etta Strangway, alias Hon. Eva Fox-Strangways, alias Margaret Sinclair,” and her description was put down as that of a “governess.” None of the hotels she had victimised, nor any of the individuals from whom she had borrowed money, supported the charge of fraud upon which she was arraigned. All the counts in this were brought by a fashionable modiste, who had furnished her with goods in return for a cheque that was subsequently dishonoured.

In the dock, as elsewhere, an alibi is apt to be of more service than an alias. Yet, with all her plausibility, “Miss Fox-Strangways” (as she still insisted on being addressed) could not supply one. At the suggestion of her lawyer, accordingly, who declared that, by doing so, she would be dealt with as a first offender and merely put on probation, she pleaded guilty.

But this optimism was unfounded, for Judge McAvoy passed sentence of a year's imprisonment.

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After the flashing circles in which she had so long cut such a conspicuous figure, the dreary obscurity of a prison cell should have been the finish of this remarkable woman. But it was not the finish. On being released from prison, she adopted a fresh name, and called herself Helen Drummond. It was as such that she went to live at an institution conducted by the Young Women's Christian Association. She did not, however, stop there long, but very quickly moved to the superior comfort and freedom of a fashionable hotel.

Despite the endeavours of the governor and the ministrations of the chaplain, prison had not reformed her. Within a month of being set at liberty, she was following her old malpractices. At first she was fairly successful. Presently, however, she went too far; and, struck by the dubious methods she employed of securing credit and goods, the police felt that the "Helen Drummond," about whose bona fides a number of business firms were enquiring, bore a suspiciously strong resemblance to the woman who still figured on their books as "Eva Fox-Strangways." From that moment the net began to narrow.

It was her inability to divest herself of her habit of wriggling out of pecuniary difficulties by giving worthless cheques that brought matters to a head. In settlement of a bill, she offered one such cheque to the cashier at her hotel. When it was dishonoured by the bank on which it was drawn, she played a last desperate throw, and, swallowing what she said was a "headache powder," suddenly collapsed. As soon as she was

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examined by the police doctor, it was discovered that what she had really swallowed was a dose of poison. Thereupon, she was removed to a hospital, where she died without recovering consciousness.

Such was the pitiful end of the woman who, born the daughter of an ex-bluejacket, imposed upon the public of England and America for ten years as the "Hon. Eva Fox-Strangways."

There was a pathetic side to the tragedy of this impostor's death. An hour after it had been reported to him, the British Consul wrote to the hospital authorities, to say that he had just received a sum of £2,000, being the proceeds of a legacy left her by an aunt in Ireland. It was, so her lawyer always declared, in anticipation of this money that the dead woman had given the disputed cheques.

Well, like the rest of us, she is entitled to the benefit of the doubt.

Mrs. Aubrey le Blond, who had met her in Switzerland, sums up Henrietta Strangway in this fashion :

Hers was indeed a strange life history. . . . No doubt, this woman's extraordinary success for so many years encouraged her to persist in her rôle ; and she must in the end have felt a contempt for the intelligence of those she hoodwinked so easily that she persuaded herself she could always continue to fool them.

She certainly did so for longer than should have been possible. Still, her victims excite little sympathy. But for their mixture of snobbishness and gullibility, the "Hon. Eva Fox-Strangways" could not have carried out her frauds upon them.

CAROLINE WALTERS

CAROLINE WALTERS

(1)

A POPULAR music-hall song, whistled by every errand-boy, and figuring on every smoking-concert programme, in the days of our grandfathers declared :

In Liverpool, in days gone by,
For ha'pence and her vittles,
A pretty girl, by no means shy,
Was made to set up skittles !

The heroine of this doggerel was a certain Caroline Walters. During her early employment, however, she was always known as "Skittles"; and the nickname stuck to her long after she left Liverpool and secured a substantial footing in another section of society.

Of whatever Caroline Walters could boast, it was certainly not blue blood. Her parentage, at any rate, must have been humble, for, left an orphan while still a mere child, she was brought up by her grandmother. This individual was a Mrs. Baggs (generally known as "Old Mother Baggs"), who occupied a garret in a Liverpool slum, and whose circumstances were so reduced that she was in receipt of parish relief. Consequently, little Caroline had to become a wage-earner as soon as possible. Not being over particular, Mrs. Baggs, who had a marked fondness for gin, found the girl a situation in the skittle-alley of the "Black Jack" public house.

It was a rough school, for the clientèle of the establishment consisted largely of merchant seamen, with language and customs to match their calling ; and the atmosphere was one of foul oaths, constant fights, and strong drink. But, rough as it was, the school imparted valuable lessons. At any rate, it taught Caroline Walters to acquire a ready tongue and to stand up for herself. People who attempted to take "liberties" with her generally got the worst of it.

As she was also a pretty girl, with a trim figure and a neat appearance (and thus very different from the common run of public-house sluts in the dockside district), it was not long before the "Black Jack" hostelry began to be visited by spruce young clerks from the shipping-offices, and others of a still higher grade. Among the latter was a certain Montgomery Treveleyan, a man of substance who had come to Liverpool on business. He was taken one afternoon to the "Black Jack" by a friend, and was so struck with the lively disposition and prettiness of the girl whom he saw in the skittle-alley there that he determined to cultivate her acquaintance.

This was not difficult, for Caroline Walters herself was ready to meet him more than half-way. She was sick of Liverpool, and of spending her life in a squalid public house, setting up skittles for drunken sailors to bowl over ; and Treveleyan, with his whiskers and wealth and "man-about-town" air, offered her a chance of escape. Accordingly, when he suggested that she should accompany him to London, she raised no objections.

"And so," says a shocked chronicler, "under the expert tuition of the accomplished Mr. Treveleyan, Carrie, at the age of seventeen, began a career which every good and modest young woman must blush to dream of."

(2)

It was in a small house at Fulham that Skittles made her first acquaintance with "fast life" in London. Treveleyan himself, as befitted a "man-about-town," had bachelor chambers in a more fashionable district. Still, he treated his provincial *protégée* liberally; and when, after a few months, he told her without any ceremony that he was tired of her and was forming a fresh "connection" with somebody else, he gave her £500, and also paid a year's rent of the house and the hire of a brougham.

"We'll part friends, anyway," said Treveleyan, as he delivered his decision. "Have a good time and enjoy yourself, my dear."

"I mean to," said Skittles, not in the least disconcerted by his abrupt finish to the Fulham Road *ménage*. As a matter of fact, she rather welcomed it, for she had already decided that she could do better for herself elsewhere. She was endowed, she felt, with the necessary equipment. Nor was she mistaken, since, in addition to a complete lack of morals, she had youth, a pretty face, an almost perfect figure, and a pronounced charm of manner. These were points on which everyone was agreed. The only difference of opinion was as to her colouring. Thus, according to some authorities, she was a brunette, and, to others, she was a blonde. Possibly, however, her complexion changed from time to time.

While under the "protection" of Treveleyan, Caroline Walters had been kept somewhat cloistered. Now, however, since she was not answerable to him any longer, she felt at liberty to stretch her wings and explore the London that

existed beyond the Fulham Road. As a preliminary, she sampled a Soho dancing-hall. There she made the acquaintance of a more experienced young woman of the world (or, rather, of the half-world), who introduced her to a number of pleasure resorts that were a distinct cut above this one. Together they visited the Haymarket night-houses, and such popular haunts of the period (1860) as the Argyll Rooms, Caldwell's, the Holborn Casino, Kate Hamilton's, Mott's, Sally Sutherland's, and the Piccadilly Saloon, etc.

Except for the absence of jazz and cabaret, there was not much to choose between the London "night life" of the 'sixties and that of the present era. It was, however, on a somewhat lower plane, and marked by more drinking and vulgarity and open misconduct. A corrupt police filled their pockets by blackmailing the proprietors; and the licensing magistrates affected to regard such establishments as "necessary to the social and moral welfare of the community."

Of these various resorts, the Piccadilly Saloon (which was demolished when the Criterion Restaurant was built) had the worst reputation. Sergeant Ballantine, who was very far from being a Puritan, dubs it "one of the foulest haunts of the metropolis." Still, he adds that its regular patrons numbered "many men of exalted rank and of all professions." Among these was, he says, "a police magistrate, who, I was told, frequently left the Saloon only in time to administer justice to the drunken and profligate who came within his jurisdiction." The Piccadilly had no licence. Yet enough drink was consumed on the premises every evening to float a battleship. The visits of the police (of which full warning would always be given) were a farce; and when the Inspector of the district

retired, "it was reported that he did so upon a very snug competence." One can well believe it.

The Argyll Rooms, which stood on the site of what is now the Trocadero, served as the accepted rallying-point of the best known "men-about-town" and the principal *demi-mondaines*. The premises were supposed to shut at midnight, but "business" would be in full swing until three o'clock in the morning. Montagu Williams, in his *Leaves of a Life*, has something to say about this establishment. His considered opinion is distinctly unfavourable. Still, the tariff was more moderate than that now ruling in similar haunts, as an habitué says that the charge for champagne was half a guinea a bottle.

Mott's, near Langham Place, also had a big vogue. It was once the scene of a blackguardly exploit on the part of Lord Hastings, who, assisted by his hangers-on, smuggled in a sackful of rats and turned them loose among the women. Notwithstanding this, the establishment had its admirers ; and a regular habitué has set down his impressions as follows :

Mott's was a unique institution, select it might almost be termed, considering the precautions that were observed regarding admittance. Every man who entered was known by name or sight. A man of good birth or position, no matter how notorious a roué, was admitted as it were by right, while parvenus, however wealthy, were turned away.

. . . The ladies who frequented Mott's, moreover, were not the tawdry make-believes that haunt the modern "Palaces," but actresses of note, who, if not Magdalenes, sympathised with them ; girls of education and refinement who had succumbed to the blandishments of youthful lordlings ; fair women here and there who had not yet developed into peeresses and progenitors of future legislators.

Caldwell's, in Soho, appealed to a somewhat less exclusive *clientèle* than the average night-house. In fact, a very much less exclusive one, as the charge for admission to the *Soirées Dansantes* was a mere eighteenpence. The building was a large hall, and the company assembled there often numbered 300, which figure, so the proprietor proudly boasted, consisted of "some of the first noblemen and many respectable young men and women from the adjoining business houses." This union of the "first noblemen" and the *élite* of the working classes was materially added to by a bevy of ladies who found the tariffs obtaining elsewhere beyond their resources. But, in an envious world, nothing is exempt from the voice of calumny. The result was, Mr. Caldwell's efforts to bridge the gulf between the aristocracy and the proletariat had its detractors. One austere critic delivered himself on the subject in this fashion :

Let us go into the gallery, and look down at the scene. The girl that dances here so modestly to-night will in twelve months have lost her maiden shame, will be dressed in silks and satins, will be dancing at the Argyll, and supping at Scot's or Quin's. . . . Beauty you will not find much of, nor that overdress which stamps the women at the Casino or the Argyll ; and the men are of the class you usually encounter in such haunts. They may be pickpockets, or they may be peers. I come away thankful that no wife or sister of mine is amongst the parties to be met nightly at Mr. Caldwell's *Soirées Dansantes*.

Then, as now, the main business of the night-houses (the expression "club" had not been evolved) was to sell liquor. "Rose Young's and Sally Sutherland's," says an expert on this portion of the London microcosm, "were small, comfortable little bars, where you could sit and smoke your pipe, and,

illegally, drink very fair gin and water. Kate's (Kate Hamilton's), on the other hand, was a very expensive house. There were many drinks on the counter, but champagne was called for by nearly everyone."

The establishment known to our grandfathers as Kate Hamilton's considered itself a distinct cut above the average night-house of the period. As such, it attracted a special *clientèle*. A picture of what was offered there has been left by a regular visitor :

This is the true Agapemone, or Abode of Love, where each individual fairy merits the apple of Paris. On entering, we come upon a counter covered with flowers and bottles of various descriptions. Behind this pretty and effective barricade, seated upon a high and gorgeous throne, clad in the richest cashmere and the choicest silk of Lyons, adorned with more than regal splendour, with rare gems glittering on her wrists, her hands, and neck, sits the Queen of the Festivities. Somewhat given to *embonpoint* is her Majesty ; a little florid, too, but yet possessing the most gracious smile that ever dimpled regal cheeks. Her voice is sweet, and its cadences beautiful and varied, sounding soft and mellifluous as it encourages you to pledge her health in the brimming goblet. The Lords of Creation are expected to cement their introduction to her in wines of a costly description. It is from this that the Queen draws her revenue, levying a percentage upon all bottles emptied, and delivering the rest to an Israelite to whom the palace really belongs.

The footmen are dressed with great care, in the orthodox black coat and cravat of irreproachable whiteness. The leader of this servile band has acquired the playful appellation of "Mr. Spurgeon," from some imaginary resemblance to that distinguished minister of the Gospel. He is of the sleek and well-fed order of menials ; and smiles blandly when receiving payment of certain fees from the numerous visitors to his royal mistress's nightly court.

Renton Nicholson, who, besides conducting his lubricious *Judge and Jury* show, had a financial interest in several of these establishments, gave his chief support to one where the controlling spirit was a Mrs. Emerson. In his memoirs he has an account of this lady's activities :

Every time we see her, she looks younger and fresher. She is quite a charmer, and the best flat-catcher in London.

"How do you do, my dear," is her general salutation to the swells who frequent her lush-crib.

"Well, I thank you," is the reply. "What will you take?"

"Sherry, please."

"A bottle of sherry, waiter," says the flat ; and so she makes the favoured few, who have the right of *entrée* behind her bar (and the privilege of drinking with her) pay for the distinguished indulgence.

"But," this authority is careful to add, "Mrs. Emerson is really and truly a very kind-hearted and charitable person, in spite of the very disadvantageous position she stands in with the public by keeping a night-house."

None the less, it would appear that Madam Emerson also had her detractors. Thus, a bishop once stated in the House of Lords that he was "credibly informed that this notorious woman, through her agents, waited at the termini of the railways and country wagons entering the metropolis, and that there she was supplied with innocent victims for the gratification of attenuated and aristocratic debauchees, by whom these girls were ruined and cast upon the world."

The House of Lords listened with interest to these harrowing disclosures. They refused, however, to take them seriously.

(3)

With her good looks, quick tongue, and high spirits, Caroline Walters was an immediate "success" among the swarm of idle and wealthy patrons she met in these dubious resorts. A mixed gathering, so far as was concerned the masculine section. Heirs to peerages and budding politicians ; Guards officers and Aldershot subalterns, and civil servants and University undergraduates ; together with a leavening of actors, artists, barristers, bookmakers, stockbrokers, and medical students, etc. But, although she would dance and flirt and sup with any of them, Skittles knew where to draw the line. She put a high price on her more intimate favours. Nor had she any difficulty in getting it.

From the fact that she never discussed her family, or exhibited a birth certificate, various odd stories were spread about her origin. One, as ill-founded as the others, declared that she was a sister of the still better known Lola Montez. Caroline neither admitted nor contradicted these assumptions.

"I'm not a lady," she would say, when challenged on the subject, "but I mean to be treated like one."

In coming to the metropolis, Caroline Walters had certainly taken her gifts to a remunerative market. Within a year of leaving the Liverpool pothouse where Treveleyan had discovered her, she had the London half-world at her feet. Select gatherings at Cremorne, little dinners at Greenwich, and river picnics at Richmond were not considered to have their finishing touch unless she attended them. A wealthy admirer set her up in a St. John's Wood villa, with servants and horses and carriages complete, and a handsome allowance. But,

having a quick temper, as well as a quick tongue, and a habit, of which she could never divest herself, of blurting out unpleasant truths, it was not long before she quarrelled with him.

"We'll call this," said her "protector," as he showed her over the premises, "the 'Palace of a Thousand and One Nights.' "

"Much better call it the 'Palace of One Night Only,'" was the retort, "because that's all you'll ever see of it."

When the other withdrew in dudgeon, Caroline merely laughed, for there was eager competition to fill the vacancy. In less than six months she had secured a position among the fashionable Hetæræ from which none could dethrone her.

The triumphant progress of Skittles along the primrose path of pleasure even took her to Burlington House ; and she is said to have inspired Landseer's brush with his "Pretty Horse-Breaker," which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1859. On account of the personality of its subject, the canvas became the "picture of the year," and a double line of visitors was always drawn up in front of it. Another result was that the term "horse-breaker" crept into the language as a descriptive one for ladies whose physical charms were in excess of their chastity.

It was during her intimacy with Treveleyan that Skittles had learned to ride. One of his presents to her had been a chestnut gelding ; and this she would exercise, escorted by a bevy of modish young men in the strapped trousers and varnished boots that the fashion of the day demanded. "She would canter up the Row," says somebody who often saw her there, "dressed in a perfectly fitting 'Princess' habit, which, made in one piece, looked as if it had been glued on to the wearer, and showed off her slim figure."

An accomplished horsewoman, Skittles saw no reason why she should not ride to hounds. Since the Earl of Stamford, who was M.F.H. of the Quorn, shared this opinion, she went to Leicestershire, piloted by Lord Hopetoun, and also by Jem Mason, the well-known jockey, who, years earlier, had won the Grand National. But, although the masculine members of the Hunt did not object, some of the women followers objected very strongly. Conspicuous among these was Lady Stamford. As it happened, there was next to nothing to choose between either of them so far as birth went, for, notwithstanding the airs and graces she assumed, her ladyship was merely the daughter of a local gamekeeper. None the less, she stood very much on her dignity ; and once, when her rival appeared in the field, she insisted that her husband "should not permit that improper woman to go out with the Quorn." The Master's response is said to have been, "My decision is she can hunt with this pack whenever she wants to, and damn all jealous and interfering females!"

The feud spread ; and, egged on apparently by a feminine cabal, one or two landowners in another district also objected to her presence among them. When she appeared with the Fitzwilliam, Lady Cardigan took it upon herself to make a formal complaint. Not in the least abashed, Skittles rode up to her and blandly observed, "As you are the head of the profession to which we both belong, I shall have to meet your wishes."

But if she could not hunt with one pack, she could generally do so with another. Still, there was trouble in 1861, when she appeared with Mr. Fernie's. "A hawk suddenly appearing amongst doves," says a chronicler, "could not have inspired

more commotion." Matters then seemed to have come to a head. Judging, however, from a passage in Mr. Palliser de Costobadie's *Annals of the Billesdon Hunt*, the victory on this occasion was to Skittles. At any rate, the volume of sympathy was with her.

The Master showed his good sense and broad mind by very gallantly refusing to countenance an unmanly and prejudiced attempt to boycott one of the fair sex—disdaining threats and intimidation.

That the trouble had developed into something serious is shown by the account of the incident as given at the time by Mr. Tailby, the M.F.H. :

The great topic of dispute has been the Skittles riot, a certain nobleman, at —— Hall, taking great objection to that young lady, and wishing me to take the hounds home when she came out, and endeavouring to force this wish by saying that it was the general wish of the country gentlemen. . . . I took my stand on the broad principles that "the hunting-field is open to all the world"; that "I am not the censor of the morality of the hunting-field"; that I have "no right to disappoint others to gratify the prejudices of an individual"; and that, in short, nothing should induce me to take the hounds home merely because Skittles is out. I am encouraged to this the more that I never hear any complaints of her conduct in the hunting-fields, or that she is in any way objectionable to the ladies who come out. On this I take my stand, let the result be what it may."

The "certain nobleman," who thus made himself conspicuous, would appear to have been Lord Berners.

The incident, being too good for purely local consumption, found its way into several of the London papers. Among

these was the *Era*, which had a paragraph, "The Earl and the Girl," and suggested that the happening might furnish the plot of a drama. "The sportsmen at Melton and Market Harborough," it observed, "have been not a little excited by the warning which has been given to a lady (who is as great an adept at skittles as in riding) that she should no longer hunt with the Quorn, but seek her amusement with other packs, the Masters of which are not so strait-laced."

Not to be behindhand in chivalry, the sporting papers also took up the cudgels on the victim's behalf. One of them, alluding to the episode, headed its account, "Attempted Extinction of the Social Evil in Leicestershire," and published a solemn leaderette on the subject :

A certain fair equestrienne has just been warned off the Quorn Hunt, and driven to those packs whose Masters are not so strait-laced, and whose lives have been distinguished by a proper appreciation of those cardinal virtues, modesty and chastity. . . . As fearless chroniclers of public opinion, we are bound to state that a feeling of discontent exists in Leicestershire, which will not easily be appeased. This has been brought about by the arbitrary ukase of the noble Master of the Quorn, and which is sought to be endorsed by Lord Berners upon Mr. Tailby.

We are no apologists for lapses from virtue, or for outrages upon propriety and good taste, but we must join in the strong protest of the number of hunting men who have written to us on the subject, as to the cruelty and illegality practised to one whose position renders her defence the more difficult, because those who take it will be certain to have reasons foreign to the truth attributed to them. . . . As it is, the apple of discord has been thrown into the finest hunting country in England, for no other reason that we can learn beyond equestrian jealousy, and that the cause of morality will be served by it

we very much doubt, as sympathy is provoked for one who only hitherto claimed respect for her feats of daring with horses and hounds.

Beyond feminine spite, there seem to have been no real grounds for making Skittles uncomfortable. Whatever her conduct in London, it was certainly a model of decorum in Leicestershire. "She was very strict with her lovers there," says Lady Augusta Fane, "and, during the hunting season, they had to be contented with love at a distance."

(4)

In addition to being an accomplished horsewoman, Skittles was also something of a whip ; and nearly every summer afternoon she would drive in the Park, where her ponies and phæton (the gift of a Russian admirer) always became a centre of interest. Among the throng surrounding her there, she was generally known as "Anonyma," a nickname for which Matthew Higgins, a journalist, was responsible. Professing to find his innocent saunterings impeded by the crowd that her presence attracted, he wrote to *The Times* on the subject :

July 3rd, 1862.

SIR,—Early in the season of 1861 a young lady, whom I must call Anonyma, for I have never been able to learn her name, made her appearance in Hyde Park. She was a charming creature, beautifully dressed, and she drove with ease and spirit two of the handsomest brown ponies eye ever beheld.

Nobody in society had seen her before, nobody in society knew her name, or to whom she belonged ; but there she was, prettier, better dressed, and sitting more gracefully in her carriage than any of the fine ladies who envied her, her looks, her skill, or her equipage.

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Anonyma seemed at first to be rather a shy damsel. She is somewhat bolder now. Last year she avoided crowds, and affected unfrequented roads, where she could more freely exhibit her ponies' marvellous action, and talk to her male acquaintances with becoming privacy. . . . But, as the fame of her beauty and equipage spread, this privacy became impossible to her. The fashionable world eagerly migrated in search of her from the Ladies' Mile to the Kensington Road.

This year, when that road is more especially required to be kept open for the convenience of visitors to the Exhibition, it is daily choked with fashionable carriages—from five to seven—all on account of Anonyma. Chairs are placed along it on either side; the best *partis* that England knows, the toadies who cling to them, the snobs who copy them—all sit there, watching for Anonyma. . . . At last their patience is rewarded. Anonyma and her ponies appear, and they are satisfied. She threads her way dexterously, with an unconscious air, through the throng, commented upon by hundreds who admire and hundreds who envy her. Meantime, thousands returning from the Exhibition are intolerably delayed by the crowd collected to gaze on this pretty creature and her pretty ponies, and the efforts of Sir Richard Mayne and his police to keep the thoroughfare open are utterly frustrated.

Could not you, sir, whose business it is to know everything and everybody, and who possibly, therefore, may know Anonyma herself, prevail on her to drive in some other portion of the Park as long as the Exhibition lasts? If she will but consent to do this, the fashionable crowd will certainly follow her, and the road to the Exhibition will be set free for the use of the public. I am, sir, your obedient servant,

H.

Higgins, of course, wrote this effusion with his tongue in his cheek. A good many people, however, took him seriously, and the correspondence columns were filled with letters on the subject of the "Perils of the Park." A "Belgravian Mother"

(alleged) also joined in the discussion, and complained with much heat of the “involuntary virginity” imposed on her quiverful of seven unmarried daughters by the “Anonymas” who thronged the once sacrosanct Ladies’ Mile. These usurpers were described by the anguished matron as “possessed of fascinating exteriors, conciliatory manners, and accommodating morals.” Evidently the competition was felt to be unfair.

There was no love lost between Peterborough Court and Printing House Square; and the *Daily Telegraph*, very indignant that so much publicity should be extended to the “Anonymas” who thus flaunted themselves among “the dandy Guardsmen, the perfumed loungers, and the naughty old gentlemen in patent leather boots,” published a fierce diatribe in its leading columns. This, with its turgid periphrases and characteristic extravagance of language, was probably contributed by George Augustus Sala :

The plain truth of the matter is that Hyde Park, like every other place of public resort, has been for a lengthened period infested by a number of lewd women, who, being well paid by wealthy profligates for selling their miserable bodies for the purposes of debauchery, are enabled to dress splendidly, and drive handsome equipages. Many of these shameful creatures are the daughters of stablemen and roughriders in the country and elsewhere; and are dexterous enough in using the whip, which, in the old Bridewell days, would have been laid about their own shoulders. . . . Their principal occupation is to interchange salutes with Lord Dundreary, and to stare modest women out of countenance. This is “Anonyma.” She has neither wit nor sense, nor manners nor morals; but she has plenty of fine clothes and sparkling jewels, and a pretty body which she sells to the highest bidder. . . . This is the

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ingenuous creature whom *The Times* is endeavouring, under a preposterous alias, to convert into a heroine. Is *The Times* newspaper powerful enough to persuade its readers that any good can accrue from petting and patting on the back, and simpering over the splendid shame of these impudent wenches? We think not. . . . For "Anonyma" in her pony-carriage we have not one grain of pity or sympathy. She is a worthless and shameful jade, and it is a scandal to have to mention her.

Since the early 'sixties, leading articles in the morning journals have become much duller.

Somebody called "The Great Mackney" had a song, "The Whole Hog or None," purporting to deal with the subject. A specimen verse ran :

The young swells in Rotten Row,
They cut it mighty fine,
And quizz the fair sex, you know,
And swear they are divine.
The pretty little "horse-breakers"
Are breaking hearts like fun,
For in Rotten Row they're bound to go
The whole hog or none !

According to the publisher, this ditty was "Mackney's greatest hit," and was "sung nightly with tumultuous and unbounded applause."

A second lyrical effort went more into details :

The pretty "horse-breakers" ride in the Row,
And cause crowds to assemble wherever they go.
But the one who is easily Queen of them all
Is dainty Miss Skittles, who holds us in thrall !

Music-hall audiences in the 'sixties were not exacting.

The subject of these criticisms, whose motto was “live and let live,” showed her wisdom by ignoring them. She probably took them as a tribute. Wanting, however, a change, she went off for a few weeks to Biarritz, where Napoleon III and his young bride were passing the summer. From her point of view, the trip was entirely successful, and she outshone all her competitors.

“In Biarritz,” says a gossiping chronicler, “she created a remarkable sensation. The hotel where she stopped was filled to overflowing. The Emperor stared at her when she appeared on the *plage*; and it was whispered that Eugénie looked furious, while the Princess Clothilde professed herself disgusted that so black a sheep should be permitted to mingle with the modest fold. The unmarried women envied her; the married ones hated her; the married men admired her; and the young bachelors were simply wild about her.”

With one individual, however, she had a brisk passage. This was a priest, who endeavoured to collect a subscription from her for the support of an institution which sheltered the local *lorettes*. What Skittles gave him, instead of a subscription, was a “piece of her mind.”

“I have no sympathy,” she told the astonished applicant, “with women who make what they call a ‘false step,’ and repent afterwards. For myself, I never regretted anything; I have never repented anything; and I have no patience with a pack of weak-minded fools of women who allow the priests to work upon them.”

She is also reported to have “let herself go” with the wife of a county magnate, who, although her own “past” was not entirely unblemished, attempted to snub the newcomer.

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But Skittles was more than a match for such individuals. "You're an example of successful harlotry," was the considered opinion she advanced. "Certainly, madam, you are very plain, and your face is quite red enough without your making it more so by losing your temper with me. I must say, too, I don't admire your husband's taste. He could have found a dozen better-looking women than you any night at Kate Hamilton's. Tell him from me that you have seen Skittles, and that she hasn't forgotten the evening he met her in the Brompton Road."

(5)

In the summer of 1862 Skittles, having grown tired of London, left England to pass a few weeks abroad. It was an expedition that was to have unexpected and far-reaching consequences. This was due to the fact that, while at Ems, travelling as "Miss Walters," she made the acquaintance of a recently married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Aubrey de Vere Beauclerk. Ems being perhaps a little dull, Mr. Beauclerk, having a fondness for questionable pleasures, had found the time hang somewhat heavily on his hands.

The newcomer, with her abundant vitality, very soon altered this condition of affairs. Before long, the intimacy between herself and Beauclerk developed to such an extent that it led to a quarrel with his wife. The next thing that happened was that he told her he had been called to London "on business." He did go to London. Skittles also left Ems, and by the same train.

Her suspicions being aroused by what she gathered from interested friends, Mrs. Beauclerk promptly followed her

husband to London, where she endeavoured to trace him. On enquiring at Long's Hotel, she was informed by the manager that Mr. Beauclerk "and wife" had recently stopped there, and handed her a letter addressed to herself. This announced that he had eloped with his Ems acquaintance, and asked her to divorce him as soon as possible.

As was only to be expected, Sir William Hardman, that Rabelaisian gossipier of the 'sixties, has some interesting allusions to this happening :

"Skittles," he writes, "has bolted to that hot-bed of abomination, the City of the West, New York, to wit. Her luxuriously decorated house is in the hands of the auctioneer ; her horses and carriages are sold ; fair patricians, eager with curiosity to know how such an one lived, and, if possible, to learn the secret of her attractions to the young men of their acquaintance, throng to the deserted halls. . . . Skittles has bolted with a married man of good family. His name is Aubrey de Vere Beauclerk, in sooth a grand name, savouring of pedigrees and aristocracy. This wretched fool has left a charming wife, and, I believe, young children. He has some four thousand pounds a year, which will be even as fourpence-halfpenny to such a woman."

This is not entirely accurate. Beauclerk did not have £4,000 a year ; and, at the date of his elopement, he had no children. The marriage had taken place in 1858, when he was only twenty-one and Mrs. Beauclerk, who happened to be a sister of the Countess of Rosslyn, was just seventeen.

The *liaison* did not last long. Skittles, thinking she could do better for herself elsewhere, took a fresh partner ; and Beauclerk returned to his wife, who, on his promises of

amendment, had agreed to forgive him. Three years later she gave birth to a son, the only child of the marriage.

But the responsibility of fatherhood (as well as the fact that he held the position of magistrate and High Sheriff) did not alter her husband for the better. His promises of amendment were worth so little that he seduced a girl employed in the village school near Ardglass Castle. He then proceeded to a second *liaison* with a woman of good family, whom he had met at a country house. An opportunity to go abroad was offered the pair by the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war, and they both volunteered for service under the Red Cross. When, in 1871, his companion died, Beauclerk published a notice of her death in an English paper as that of "Esther Beauclerk, aged 27 less 13 days, from the after effects of a cold caught while nursing in the Sedan Hospital."

(6)

On parting from Beauclerk, the fair, but distinctly frail, Skittles went to Vienna. She did not go there alone, but with a member of the staff of the British Embassy. The Foreign Office endeavoured to prevent the fact becoming public property. They were, however, unsuccessful, and Queen Victoria took a strong view of the escapade. As a result the diplomatist had his career summarily checked, and his travelling-companion found herself deprived of his society. Thereupon, she hurried off to Paris, to become the *chère amie* of (among others) a wealthy banker, Achille Fould. According to herself (not always a very reliable authority) in Paris she also met a couple of old friends, in Montgomery Treveleyan and Kate Hamilton, and two new ones in Lord Clanricarde and

Lord Hartington. As for Treveleyan, he had rather gone down in the world, since his address happened to be the debtors' prison at Clichy. Kate Hamilton, however, had fallen on her feet ; and, "driven from England by a petty persecution as pitiable as unmerited," she was running what would now be called a night-club in the Faubourg St. Honoré.

Naturally enough, the French journalists took a considerable interest in Skittles and her career. What some of them said (and wrote) about it was not entirely accurate. Thus, a news-gatherer in *La Vie Parisienne* declared that she had been a barmaid on an English railway ; somebody else said she was an ex-governess ; and columns upon columns were filled with imaginative, but circumstantial, details as to her parentage. No scrap of gossip was too trivial for serving up in a paragraph ; and, as long as she lived among them, she was a regular source of income to the Society reporters. One ridiculous anecdote they printed was that, disguised as a man, and wearing a coat of mail, she fought a duel in the Bois.

Taking it all round, Skittles found her sojourn in the brilliant and frankly pleasure-loving Paris of the Second Empire very agreeable. The life there suited her temperament, for she had liberal measure of both money and masculine adoration. There was competition, certainly, for the Cytherean battalion at that period was a strong one. But the English recruit leapt into the front rank without an effort. What is more, she stopped there, becoming, as Frédéric Loliée remarks, "owing to her aristocratic deportment and the perfection of her equipage, the cynosure of the fashionable world." On summer afternoons, when she appeared in the Bois, driving a couple of thoroughbreds, and escorted by a couple of mounted

grooms, she attracted as much notice as the Empress herself, In his *Ce Que Mes Yeux Ont Vu*, Arthur Meyer, editor of *Le Gaulois*, alludes to this custom :

Un jour, une nouveauté fit sensation : on eut l'étonnement de voir Mme. Skittles apparaître dans une voiture très élégante, dénommée "cabriolet à pompe," et que suivaient à cheval deux hommes d'attelage — tout comme pour les daumonts impériales.

There is also a reference to Skittles in an anonymous book, *Society Recollections in Paris and Vienna* :

"In after years," says this chronicler, "she came to Paris, where she was famous for her wonderful horses and carriages, everything was so quiet ; the harness and liveries of her servants, and she dressed herself always in dark colours, so that no one, unless they knew who she was, would have suspected that she was of the *demi-monde*."

The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war had the effect of compelling Skittles to leave Paris. She remained, however, abroad ; and, during the next few years, she was heard of in Baden and Homburg and Monte Carlo, and also in Italy and Switzerland. It was not until 1878 that she returned to London. There she resumed her former custom of driving in the Park almost every day, where her well-turned-out victoria, with its high-stepping chestnuts, and attendant cavaliers, was followed by an interested swarm of onlookers.

(7)

The vogue of Skittles ceased as suddenly as it had arisen. After the mid-'eighties, her name, which had once been on everybody's lips, was seldom heard. The theatres and restaurants saw her only at rare intervals ; she gave up driving in the

Park ; and the paragraphists stopped chronicling her doings. She was said to be living in the country ; she was said to have gone abroad ; and she was said to be dead. A Sunday paper, indeed, went so far as to announce her death.

As was perhaps only to be expected, a number of books, written round what purported to be the career of Caroline Walters, immediately appeared.

An early one among them was a volume published in Paris. This was entitled *Memoires d'une Biche Anglaise*, and professed to have been dictated by its subject to a French journalist. Apparently, however, he had some qualms as to the manner in which it would be received, for he prefaced it with an explanatory note :

Le livre qu'on va lire n'est point un roman fait à plaisir. C'est le récit exact de la vie d'une femme qui a eu, à Londres et à Paris, une grande notoriété dans un certain mode.

None the less, the compiler seemed so curiously unfamiliar with the facts that he thought it necessary to add :

Quillette (en Anglais Skittles, jeu de quilles) n'est pas un nom de fantaisie, mais le nom vrai auquel répond l'héroïne des pages suivantes.

Another remarkable volume (but this time in English) was one called *Anonyma, or Fair but Frail; a Romance of West-end Life, Manners, and Captivating People*. In this production, however, the heroine, Caroline Walters, figures as "Cecilia Gale."

"I hope," says the author, "I may not be taxed with levity if I am compelled to allude to a career which bestows upon those who embrace it a notoriety somewhat undesirable, and a

popularity which is more lucrative than eviable. By the force of circumstances, and the injudicious conduct of mistaken friends, Cecilia had become one of those pretty butterflies who revel in the delights of illicit love without being fettered by the claims of honourable wedlock."

Mid-Victorian propriety (1884 brand) rendered it imperative that such locutions should be employed.

Holywell Street also rose to the occasion, and errand boys were tempted to waste their money on *Skittles in Paris*. This, however, was a vulgar and a catchpenny effort, in which well-known men appeared as the "Duke of Scilly Islands," the "Marquis of Starborough," "Lord Highmountain," and "Lord Roughdiamond," etc.

But all these efforts were based on a false assumption. Skittles was not dead. She had merely retired from "business." As a matter of fact, she was living very quietly in Chesterfield Gardens, where her next-door neighbour was that Lady Cardigan with whom she had once had a memorable encounter at Melton.

(8)

In the summer of 1890, the name of Skittles cropped up once more. What, after this long interval, then brought it temporarily into the limelight was the sudden decision of Mrs. Beauclerk to take proceedings against the husband by whom she had been deserted nearly thirty years earlier at Ems. The grounds on which she petitioned for a divorce from him were his cruelty and misconduct.

Although the case was undefended, the task of Sir Charles

Russell, who appeared for Mrs. Beauclerk, was, as the law then stood, a difficult one. This was because, while the husband's misconduct was not disputed, it was another thing to establish such a measure of "cruelty" as would permit the court to grant relief. Hence, counsel's main point was that "the respondent had insulted the petitioner by repeatedly confronting her with his amours and giving her name to a succession of mistresses, thereby revealing such profligacy as to render the marriage-tie a galling and intolerable burden." A doctor said that Mrs. Beauclerk's heart had been affected by these infidelities ; and her sister, the Dowager Countess of Rosslyn, said that when she first heard of her husband's elopement with Caroline Walters "she fell on the floor in an unconscious state, and for a time her life was despaired of."

The story which Mrs. Beauclerk had to unfold was a pathetic one. It began with the breaking up of her married life at Ems, under circumstances with which the public were already familiar. After she had forgiven her husband for his elopement with Skittles, he had, she said, gone to Paris, accompanied by a second woman whom she knew as "Esther." On following him there, she found this woman, who passed as "Mrs. Beauclerk," wearing a dress which belonged to herself ; and, when she died, her husband declared that "he had lost the only woman he really loved." A year later, however, he took another mistress, a certain Katherine Tucket, with whom he was still living.

"Who was this woman 'Esther' ?" demanded counsel.

"I never heard her real name. She was always known as 'the Baroness.' "

"H'm, an Austrian baroness, I expect," was the response.

It does not sound very rib-rending. Yet this sally excited that "Laughter in court!" without which no divorce action is held to be complete.

As twenty years had elapsed since she had separated from her husband, the petitioner was naturally asked why she had waited so long in bringing this suit. Her explanation was that she had not wished to take any definite steps until her son should have reached his majority, and this had only just occurred.

Sir Edward Clarke, for the Queen's Proctor, opposed the petition. "A husband's adultery alone," he said, "does not entitle an injured wife to divorce; and it is unheard of to grant a decree on the ground of cruelty which occurred twenty years ago." There was no getting over this; and Mr. Justice Butt ruled that, as the parties had not lived together since 1870, and there had been no molestation by the husband during the interval, the petition must be dismissed.

Mrs. Beauclerk entered an appeal, and Sir Charles Russell, urging that there had been no "unreasonable delay" in launching the original action, declared that "legal cruelty" did not necessarily imply specific violence. The Solicitor-General once more opposed, his point being that, by letting so much time elapse, the petitioner had condoned her husband's misconduct. The court shared this view, and the appeal was dismissed on the grounds that "the case was not one in which any protection for the wife was wanted."

There was still a card left in the pack. Mrs. Beauclerk played it, and sued for restitution of conjugal rights. In this she was successful. As, however, her husband did not comply with the order of the court, desertion was also established. Since,

too, his subsequent infidelity was admitted, his wife was enabled to bring a fresh action for divorce. This was heard by Sir Francis Jeune in 1895 ; and, as the respondent did not appear, the petitioner's counsel, Sir Henry James, had a simple enough task to secure a *decree nisi*.

After the Beauclerk divorce case (in which, by the way, there had only been an oblique reference to herself), Skittles dropped completely out of the public eye. But she lived for another fifteen years. These were as quietly ordered as her earlier ones had been hectic. Assuming brevet rank as a married woman, she was known as Mrs. Baillie, and settled down in a small house just off Park Lane. If her life had been "merry," it was also long, for she lived to be eighty.

From the skittle-alley of a Liverpool tavern to a mansion in Mayfair. This was certainly something of a jump. Still, Caroline Walters bridged it.

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